West Side—West End

Dance and Dancers

FEBRUARY 1959 This month's full ballet guide 2s

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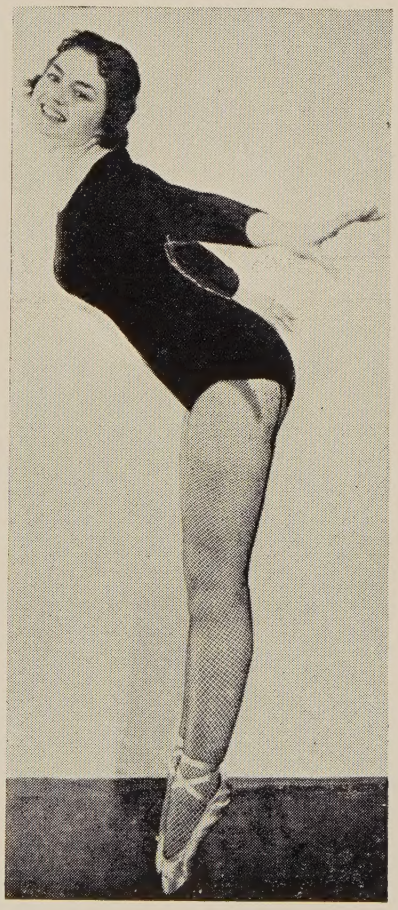

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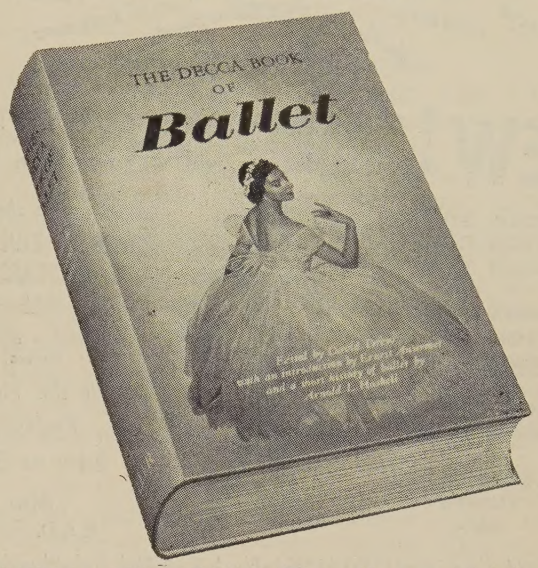

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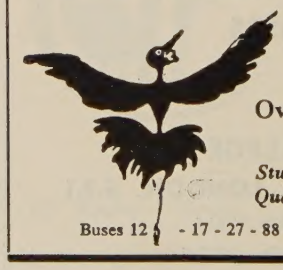

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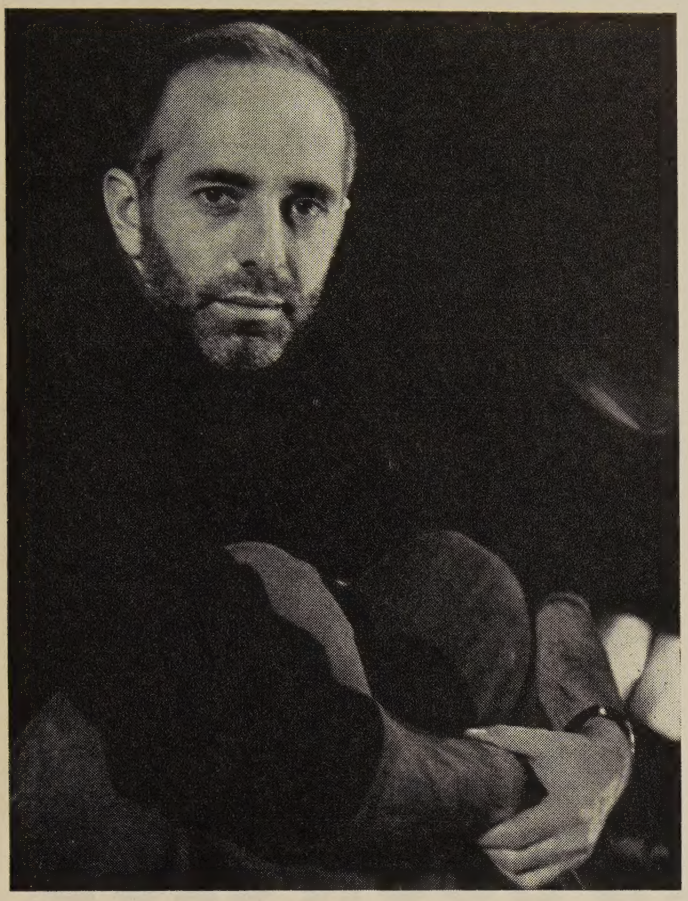

On stage at a West Side Story *rehearsal.* *Photo : McBean*

JEROME ROBBINS

JEROME ROBBINS has always been the boy most likely. In 1940 he joined the Ballet Theatre *corps de ballet* and has now spent 19 years not looking back. In 1944 he crashed into choreography, producing for his first apprentice ballet that master-work *Fancy Free.* Just to show that this was no flash-in-the-pan he casually followed it up with *Interplay,* and in two swift strokes established himself as one of the leading choreographers of the day. Other ballets followed ; he took to doing musicals, *On the Town, The King and I,* and many others. In 1949 he became Associate Artistic Director of New York City Ballet, and co-architect with George Balanchine of that company's remarkable repertory. In the autumn of 1957 he initiated, produced directed, choreographed and generally vitalised *West Side Story.* This has brought his talents outside ballet's parish, and he now stands as one of the theatrical leaders of the Western world.

Robbins is restless and dynamic, egghead and passionate ; he believes in what he is doing, he worries more about what he is going to say than how he says it, he shows an unusual combination of effortless facility and uncompromising integrity. Success has almost always come easily to him, and he has slapped it down as it came, only to go on to fresh success. Most men having done *Fancy Free* and *Interplay* would still be turning out cute comedies — not so Robbins. Unpredictable and mixed-up, his ideas occasionally outsoar his medium. But in *Age of Anxiety* and *Afternoon of a Faun* he has produced two of the ten best ballets of the past decade ; in *West Side Story* he has made theatrical history.

The things that make Robbins and his work tick are few — a hatred of racialism, a neurotic quest for himself, a love of New York and things New York, an understanding of Jazz and jazz movement, a dry-martini sense of humour, a dislike of chi-chi, an honest-to-goodness love and understanding of his fellow men with all their foibles and their fears, their insecurity and their pain. What he is going to do next is anyone's guess. But if anybody is going to prove himself the choreographic master of the next twenty years then Jerome Robbins is the boy most likely.

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Dance and Dancers

Editor: PETER WILLIAMS *Associate Editor.* CLIVE BARNES

Assistant Editor · E. C. MASON

WORLD'S LARGEST SALE IN THE FIELD

Her House in Order

"TAKING stock of what I've got and what I haven't. What do I find? " so sang that marvellous artist, Ethel Merman, in *Annie Get Your Gun* ; she went on to discover that she " had the sun in the morning and the moon at night ". Rather obvious discoveries, of course, but it takes most people many years to discover the important things that were there all the time. I have long felt that the time had come for those responsible for the present and future of the world's major ballet companies to do a little stock-taking. Although we welcome new creations in any repertory, there comes a time when everyone can benefit by a little looking back and consolidating. What do we find? Well, there have been ballets which enjoyed a success for several seasons and then got dropped for one reason or another, never to be revived, apparently ; then there are those works of decided merit, possibly genius, which the public and critics at the time considered to have none of these qualities so they too were dropped. Then there are those ballets which enjoyed a great success when they were first given but whose revival after several years reveals them to be shallow and of no lasting quality. The question of deciding which to keep is a pretty tricky one that needs the greatest foresight on the part of someone.

It is here that every company in the world might take a lesson from some of the recent activities of the Royal Ballet. Some years ago, Frederick Ashton mounted a ballet to Stravinsky's *Scènes de Ballet* ; apart from a pitiful few, its great qualities were realised neither by the critics nor the public. It was dropped, one thought for ever, but its sudden revival recently proved that the critics and public have had time to come to their senses. MacMillan's working of Stravinsky's most recent ballet score met just the same fate as did *Scènes de Ballet,* yet it is to be hoped that if *Agon* is revived in four or five years' time it will also bring about a re-cap from everyone. Howards *La Fête Etrange,* one of the most intelligent works in the whole British repertory, has enjoyed only a minority success in the past. Its recent revival, however, has brought it new popularity and the greatest critical acclaim of any work recently given at Covent Garden. It is to be hoped that forthcoming revivals of Cranko's *Harlequin in April* and MacMillan's *Danses Concertantes* will prove equally successful, for Dame Ninette de Valois has certainly delved into her treasure chest of a quarter-century repertory and pulled out some plums.

At this moment, when the world's ballet repertories are getting terribly cluttered ; when new creators are hard to find, and those that have been found are not really giving of their best, the administrators of every company could well swallow their pride and take a lesson from Dame Ninette and what she has done for those dreadfully tasteless and inartistic British.

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PRELIMINARY SKIRMISHES: The two rival gangs — the home team, the Jets, and the visiting team, the Puerto Rican Sharks — in a street brawl in the opening moments of West Side Story. *"All right: kill each other! But not on my beat!" shouts Police Officer Krupke (Hal Galili) from top right.*

West Side—West End

On September 26, 1957, West Side Story **opened at the Winter Garden Theatre in New York and our American correspondent, Arthur Todd, wrote about it in our December, 1957, issue. On December 12, 1958, the show opened its London season at Her Majesty's Theatre. It proved to be a landmark in the integration of dancing into the production of musicals.**

by PETER WILLIAMS

Photographed by ANGUS McBEAN

PRODUCTION

"DIDN'T think much of the story, did you?" said a comfortably upholstered matron to her friend as she pushed her way through the star-studded throng, consisting of every star at present playing in London, after the preview of *West Side Story* at Her Majesty's Theatre. Her friend, obviously a yes-woman or confidante, nodded her head violently presumably as a gesture of accord.

"Help!" I thought, "is this going to be a typical London reaction." I need not have worried because the press reaction, with the exception of one governessy Sunday paper, was adulatory as also has been the reaction of those of one's friends who cluttered into the first weeks. What is, of course, absurd is that had the two ladies seen the same story against a background of Verona and not New York's West Side they would have been swooning in ecstasy.

The love story of two people belonging to two opposing camps or parties, against a background of strife and violence was not even new by the time that Shakespeare so successfully cashed in on it. The story was always a good one but Shakespeare's poetry made it a sublime one. Those who object to Jerome Robbins and Arthur Laurents' version of the old tale are just deliberately ignoring a situation that is horribly with us today — the gangs of juvenile delinquents who roam the streets and engage in gang warfare in a pathetic attempt at asserting what they believe to be their rights. It is a situation no less violent than existed in Mediterranean countries during the Middle Ages. Today it is a situation that has arisen from a generation weaned in an atmosphere of death, when life has assumed a 10 per cent store price, and it is carried on by those who never had any parental discipline at the age when it was most necessary to them. It is just one of the many tragedies of the aftermath of war and one which nobody had quite bargained for; or that's how it seems because the authorities are quite lily-livered in their methods of dealing with it.

But there is nothing lily-livered in the way that the authors of *West Side Story* have tackled the situation and they have achieved what is undoubtedly the most topical musical of our time and one which mirrors the uncertainty and unhappiness of this pre-nuclear age.

For the choreographic talent of Jerome Robbins, of course, the theme was ideal and it has become a more extrovert age of anxiety. But it is strange how dance and violence are so often connected with each other — take, for instance, the war dances of African tribes or of the Red Indians, the Apache dances of the Paris slums and the Rock 'n' Roll of our present Teddy boys. Robbins has made good use of this phenomenon because his dances in *West Side Story* are seldom apart from the narrative but are intricately threaded into the action and the story so that they become a protracted war dance. His general production and choreography thus become one. It is far more of a dance drama than a musical with dances.

From the moment the curtain rises on the two gangs — the Jets and the Sharks — engaged in preliminary street skirmishes, the production pulsates in music and movement rising to a crescendo of excitement in the fight under the highway at the end of Act I resulting in the death of Bernardo/Tybalt (played by Ken Le Roy) and Riff/Mercutio (played by George Chakiris).

The first encounters between the two gangs are quietly sinister like a volcano about to erupt — little spurts of anger, the occasional flicking of fingers, even the exaggerated politeness which brings its

NEUTRAL TERRITORY: Both gangs meet at a dance in the local gym where the turbulent situation, already almost at boiling point, is thinly veiled by outward politeness. Left, Anita (Chita Rivera) is seen dancing with the Shark leader Bernardo (Ken Le Roy) on the left of the picture. Right, the dancing gets wilder while the master of ceremonies (David Holliday, back left) tries to keep order.

touches of uneasy humour all of which make the spectator realise the burning hatred that lies so thinly veiled and how every finger is poised on a flick-knife. From the word go the atmosphere of tension is established, an atmosphere which never relaxes until the final curtain over two hours later.

The two gangs meet later on neutral territory at the weekly "hop" in the local gym but even here the apparently carefree atmosphere scarcely disguises an undercurrent of imminent warfare and there are moments when the dance suddenly divides into two opposing sides when the menacing situation is broken up by the nervous patter of the master of ceremonies. Suddenly on each side of the stage appear the two protagonists — Maria/Juliet (played by Marlys Watters) and Tony/Romeo (played by Don McKay). They stand looking at each other and as they come together the rest of the dancers gradually fade out. This admirable device has been cribbed wholeheartedly from the Bolshoi *Romeo and Juliet* and there is absolutely nothing wrong in that as it is the only possible way of conveying the first meeting of two inevitable lovers in a public place and for showing how to them the rest of the world is blotted out. The dances all through this scene are typical jives and mambos of any local Palais de Danse and they achieve their theatrical effect by their excessive speed, their grouping and Robbins' masterly floor patterns. Possibly the most conventional dance routine in the whole show is the brilliant and satirical "America" which comes in the next scene. Choreographically it is rather outside the general action plan. But it is such a wonderful number and it is given with such speed by Chita Rivera and five girls that one forgives any choreographic shortcomings. Nor does it matter that its satire on the problem of Puerto Rican minorities in Manhatten is something that the average English audience is quite unlikely completely to understand.

SHARK GIRLS HAVE THEIR SAY: Chita Rivera, in front, with three other dancers sing the satirical song, America, *about the comparisons between their native Puerto Rico and New York. This is undoubtedly one of the hit numbers of the show.*

Later that night the rival gangs meet in a drugstore to decide on the place and the weapons for the inevitable Rumble and here again we have a dance which grows gradually out of the action — "Cool" is a number which sends the dancers of the Jets group leaping, turning and tumbling all over the stage and the pace is tremendous. So energetic is it that one starts to wonder how anybody will have any breath left for the Rumble fight which follows almost immediately.

Now I have seen a great many fights upon the stage over a considerable number of years but I have seldom, if ever, seen one so effective as this. In the first place it is helped by the construction of the setting, about which more later, and the fact that some of the characters have to climb a high wire enclosure to get on to the stage at all gives it all another dimension. The whole production of the scene is so good that it has you poised tensely on the edge of your seat. The hatred that has been boiling-up through the act suddenly bubbles over and the battling is gruesome in its violence and realism, all of which is emphasised by Leonard Bernstein's score which matches physical punches with musical punches. When the battling and killings are at their height, a police siren is heard and all the combatants scuttle away like cowardly mice leaving the stage empty for the stretched-out bodies of Bernardo and Riff while a doleful clock strikes the hour. After so much violent action this slow curtain without movement or music was the only way to end the first half of the show and amounted to one of those masterstrokes of theatre which one adds to that small list of memorable moments in play-going.

At this point I began to wonder how it was possible to spin the tragedy out so as to fill the second half because it is also at this point in the Shakespeare play that the tragedy of the star-crossed lovers moves away from its swirling background and becomes a more intimate domestic tragedy. Without the beauty of Shakespeare's poetry I began to fear that the whole thing might descend to interminable stereotyped love duets. Again I had not reckoned on Robbins' production ability. It is true that there is

far less movement in the second act and the focus is primarily on the unfortunate situation of the two lovers but by pulling every theatrical punch this second act never palls.

It got dangerously near it in a dream sequence where Maria and Tony imagine a world no longer enclosed by fear and tenement walls—the buildings dissolve to reveal a highly-coloured expanse of sky with red fire-escapes floating in mid-air. This same sort of scene had been much better done by Agnes de Mille in *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel,* but as in so many other scenes which Robbins had pinched from other choreographers, this one was so well integrated into the whole that nobody could have the heart to complain. As I have said so often before, there is absolutely nothing dishonest in borrowing ideas from other creators provided they are used perfectly within the context of the work as a whole — after all, the whole art of the theatre is built up on borrowing which only becomes punishable theft if the borrowed object is used in the wrong way.

It is quite possible that people who had only known the dirt and greyness of a big city slum might imagine a peaceful world to be something always seen against a wide horizon and a rosy picture postcard sunset. The dancing here consists mainly of walking around and running steps. Finally with the intrusion of the Jets and Sharks and a resurrected Bernardo and Riff, the dream spell is broken and the slums return and the story proceeds to its inevitably tragic conclusion. But before this there is a brief return to the sinister vitality of the first act. Juliet/Maria's message to Romeo/Tony as to where they shall meet before escaping, which in Shakespeare's play is entrusted to the Nurse, is here given to Maria's Puerto Rican sister, Anita. Anita goes to the local drugstore to pass it on to Tony but unfortunately finds the rival gang, the Jets, already ensconced there. They start to taunt her and gradually, in dance, they get so violent that they almost rape her. This again is a brilliant piece of dance production and to me one of the most frightening moments in the show. Before she leaves she spits out the wrong message in a blind rage which leads to the death of Romeo/Tony.

After Tony's death, the rival gangs, at last brought to their senses, combine in carrying off his body and the Jets and the Sharks file out soberly and quietly together as the curtain falls. Again a quiet curtain and again a rather obvious device but again a device so beautifully dovetailed into the general plan that I defy anyone not to be profoundly moved by it. Many of the stellar ladies were quite unashamedly letting the mascara course down their cheeks as they pushed out of that preview even if there were two matrons who did not care much for the story!

THE DANCING

WHEN it comes to dancing in musicals, the Americans have us beat all along the line. They have a natural vitality and virility that comes not naturally to Europeans. It is something that is bound to emerge from a new country and not one that for centuries has had its natural exuberance curbed by the conventions of a more staid way of living and by occasional periods of decadence. Whereas the refinements, sense of tradition and elegance of style are inherent in all Europeans when they dance, the Americans can express their joy at living in a far less inhibited manner. Frankly, I shudder to think what may happen to *West Side Story* when it is taken over by a cast of English dancers because, although I know we shall give it all we can, it is not a natural means of expression to

JETS ON THE WAR PATH: After the dance at the gym, the Jets meet at a local drugstore to plan their forthcoming battle with the Sharks. Riff (the Jet leader played by George Chakiris) is one from left. The girl is Anybody's (a Jet hanger-on played by Sylvia Tysick).

"COOL": With enthusiasm for the fight growing, the Jets and their girls indulge in a lively dance which becomes a sort of war dance.

us as it is to them. In the present American cast it is impossible to single any dancer out from the rest as they are all so excellent in their own way and they have been so carefully hand-picked by Jerome Robbins according to the various characteristics of each particular rôle. Every member of the *corps* is a definite character, each even has a name, yet each character is so carefully pieced into the mosaic of the whole that it is as a body that one must judge them. Possibly in private life they are all gentle, well-spoken and responsible citizens, but what they present upon the stage so realistically is as sinister a collection of hoodlums as one hopes never to find oneself alone with in a back alley — a sort of male witches covern. Their vitality is amazing and it seems incredible that a collection of human beings have the energy to keep up so much almost non-stop brawling, leaping and turning while singing at the same time for two and a half hours each night and for five hours on matinee days.

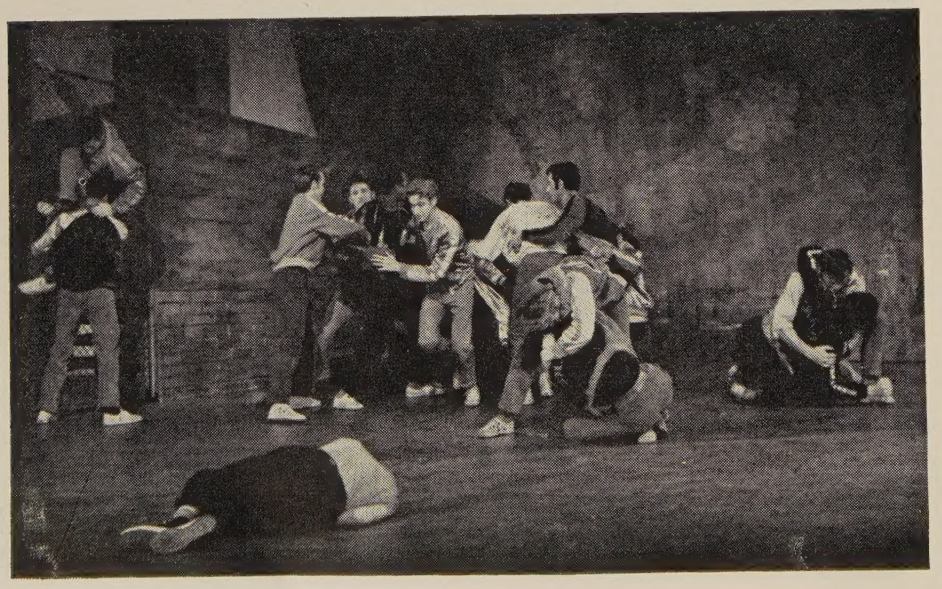
Out of all this high-powered humanity there is, in fact, one person who should be singled out — Chita Rivera as the Puerto Rican Anita. She has a star quality such as I have not seen in a musical for many years. When she sings and dances she is dynamic but even when she is acting she brings an edge to every sentence and every movement. She put over the "America" number with a punch that drove it home to the highest point of the gallery. She ought to have a whole show built round her.

MUSIC

THE Leonard Bernstein-Jerome Robbins combination is not a new one. Their biggest successes together have been *Fancy Free* and the musical which emerged out of that notable ballet — *On the Town.* A year ago, our New York correspondent, Arthur Todd, sent me the record of the *West Side Story* music and various people's reaction to it have been enlightening. There have been those who loved it, there have been those, used to more stereotyped sort of musical, who did not like it at all; there are those who quite liked it as it seemed to them exciting but who thought it lacked any hit tunes. In fact, most of them were judging it as something apart from its context. My own feeling has been that, although I always liked it and found it had a throbbing intensity, the music really needs to be heard with the rest of the show. It is as much an integral part of the whole as Prokofiev's score for *Romeo and Juliet.* In fact, much of the Bernstein score appears to have been greatly inspired by Prokofiev, particularly noticeable in some of the more expressive musical passages in the final scene. It is a tightly-knit score and its urgency suggests that this little incident between the Jets and the Sharks is only one of many such unfortunate clashings of minorities in many large cities all over the world. Only two numbers strike me as being interpolations—"America" and "Gee, Officer Krupke"—but they have such obvious popular appeal that to omit them would decidedly harm the show as a whole. There is a certain amount of reprise and use of *leit motif,* but reprise is only used to create a definite effect and not as mere padding. For instance, the sentimental love song for Maria and Tony, "Tonight", is used again later by the Jets and Sharks in brutal anticipation of the ensuing fight.

Many may say that they find some of the score's more sentimental moments rather sickly. But here again they reflect a typical sentimental attitude of the type of person who sings them in the play. Altogether my only argument with the music in the theatre as opposed to the record is that it is played by a far too small orchestra and that most of the richness of scoring is lacking.

THE RUMBLE: The fight under the highway which started out as an honourable battle of strength turns into a battle of flick-knives between Riff and Bernardo, in the picture above. Eventually both are killed and, in the picture below, Riff's body is left while the two gangs make good their escape after the sound of a police siren.



DECOR

OLIVER SMITH, who designed the sets, has always impressed me by his sheer professionalism. A real smart cookie of a designer who seldom touched any heights of genius but who has, at all times, been ingenious and supremely competent. In the case of *West Side Story,* however, he has shown far more than general competence and at moments touches considerable heights of theatrical designing. It seems somehow that in this work, Oliver Smith has found his true form. He has achieved a rare combination — complete understanding of the practical essentials of the theatre seen through the eyes of a painter — and has conjured magic from what really are most unpromising conditions.

The opening on to a typical back-street setting is conventional enough and his main purpose has been to give a suggestion of environment while leaving enough space for the entire Jet and Shark gangs to have their preliminary brawlings. The old cynic might here sit back and think that as far as the designing was concerned this musical was just going to be another of "those". But as the action moves towards the scene in the gym the first surprise occurs. A black front cloth scene is suddenly invaded by brightly dressed dancers while at the same moment a great curtain of brightly coloured satin streamers ripples down — through these streamers can be seen the gym and the dance in progress. It is also at this moment that we are made conscious of the remarkable continuity of the scenes, how each one merges into the next without any pause for black-outs and house tabs.

Gymnasiums decorated for a rather sleazy dance are not the easiest things to design without making them look just tatty, but with great simplicity Oliver Smith has sug-

gested environment while achieving a striking stage picture. The rope ladders and general gymnasium paraphernalia, which one can just see through the temporary decorations, appear to be woven into most of the other scenes; there are also fire-escapes and balconies and distant windows and they seem to frame the action, make interesting patterns and compositions and suggest height and distance with a feeling that this slum district goes on for ever and soars up to a height that always excludes the sun.

This scene merges into a brilliant scarlet wall and the back-yard, which includes Maria/Juliet's balcony, slides in on a truck from the prompt side. It seems as colourful as any similar scene that any designer has cooked-up for that other love story in Shakespeare's Verona. This scene dissolves and an elaborately constructed drugstore set slides in from the back. But all through these scene changes, Robbins has produced in such a way that the action moves with the scenery.

Without any question the pinnacle of set designing comes with the scene under the highway where the fight takes place and I think that this is the most effective scene that I have witnessed in any post-war musical. Altogether a splendid composition, a symphony in slate, of harsh dramatic shadows. A place of metal tubing, of high wire-netted enclosures, a place of mystery and desolation untouched by pure daylight. A place, in fact, ideal for gangs to fight out their grievances away from prying eyes. There is a texture to these tortured walls and the whole has been magnificently lit by Joe Davis. In fact the lighting has been applied with the master brush strokes of a painter.

The only different designing in the second half comes with the dream sequence. This has been criticised for its brashness, yet again I feel it is necessary to consider how it fits into the plan of the whole. Maria and Tony, sick of their background and environment, think of a world free of the horrors surrounding them. The back streets dissolve into a pearly sunset sky and the red fire-escapes descend like fantastic clouds suspended in mid-air. Anything prettier, or in what we might consider to be in better taste, would have been completely alien to the atmosphere and the general conception of the whole. It would have stuck out like a sore thumb. It achieves its purpose in that it suddenly gives a vision of the joy of space and freedom after the physical and architectural overcrowding of the slums. This brief current of air brings contrast and makes the return to mean back streets seem even more overpowering.

The costumes by Irene Sharaff (adapted for the present production by Jocelyn Rickards) are very right and never overstep their territory in trying to be pretty or clever-clever. They are just the sort of suits and dresses that those people would wear. It would have been so easy to be witty about the Teddy Boy garments, yet in a piece which calls for realism, the designer has gone no further in fantasy than might be seen any evening in the Elephant and Castle area or even around the Park Lane coffee bars. She has allowed herself a little licence with the Puerto Rican Sharks because anyway they would be more colourful. But at the same time it is the costumes which give the show its moments of brilliant colour and they reflect a typical feature of the present mood of this earth's people — a hectic attempt at colour and slight fantasy as a breakaway from drab conditions and fear for the future.

It only remains for me to praise the lighting of Joe Davis, who must surely be either inspired by, or a pupil of, that great lighting master — Jean Rosenthal. I have not seen a musical lit with such intelligence since Hassard Short brought electricians' magic to a revue, *Stop Press*, at the Adelphi Theatre in the mid-thirties, and everyone who can remember that remarkable show will realise that it is praise indeed.

SOMEWHERE: In a dream sequence, the two lovers dream of a world free of fear and fighting but the dream turns to a nightmare as the reality of the fight and the killing crowds in. In the picture above, Maria (Marlys Watters) is seen held aloft and separated from her lover. Below, the fight between Bernardo and Riff is re-enacted while Tony (Don Mackay) is separated from Maria.

CONCLUSION

IT would not be surprising if you expressed some concern that a magazine devoted mainly to ballet should expend so many pages on something which does not directly fall into the category of pure ballet. But I would remind you that ballet and theatrical dancing also have their places outside the regular ballet companies. For some years we have had ballets in what are erroneously considered to be the lighter side of theatre, and musical shows have often employed the world's most distinguished choreographers and also its brightest dancing stars. But in the main these have been interpolations and rather outside the territory of the show as a whole. It is my personal opinion that *West Side Story* has opened up vast new possibilities for the dance. It is the first time that the dancing has become an integral part of the proceedings and without which the show would just not exist. What is more, the choreographer has been called upon to do far more than just arrange the dances; he is producer and director of all movement and this gives everything far greater unity. After all it is not unnatural that a choreographer should also make a good producer because who understands all expressive movement and general stage composition and floor patterns better than he? The unfortunate thing is that few European impresarios, with their cardinal fault of only playing safe to popular appeal, are awake to this fact. Whoever it was who gave Robbins and his co-choreo-

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MEDEA : *Jason with his wife and his illicit love. Left, Jason (Jacques d'Amboise) with Creusa, daughter of King Creon (Violette Verdy). Right, with his wife, Medea (Melissa Hayden).* *Photos : Martha Swope.*

TWO NEW YORK CITY BALLET CREATIONS

Medea

First given at the Royal Theatre in Stockholm in 1954. First given by New York City Ballet at City Center, New York, on November 26, 1958. Choreography by Birgit Cullberg. Music by Béla Bartók ('Allegro Barbaro' and selections from 'Fourteen Bagatelles', 'Mikrokosmos', 'Suite : Op. 14', and 'Four Dirges'). Orchestrated by Herbert Sandberg. Costumes by Lewis Brown.

Cast

Medea ..... MELISSA HAYDEN
Jason ..... JACQUES d'AMBOISE
Their Children ..... DELIA PETERS, SUSAN PILLERSDORF
Creon, King of Corinth SHAUN O'BRIEN
Creusa, his Daughter VIOLETTE VERDY
Chorus

THE second work by Swedish choreographer, Birgit Cullberg, to be presented in America this season (the first was *Miss Julie* for American Ballet Theatre) proved to be the most distinguished of the three new ballets presented during the first half of New York City Ballet's season. Additionally, since this is such a strongly dramatic piece, it should prove a welcome addition to the repertory which currently consists of so many abstract works.

In this re-telling of the Medea legend, Birgit Cullberg has based her ballet on the Euripides version and her three chief figures — Medea (Melissa Hayden), Jason (Jacques d'Amboise) and Creusa (Violette Verdy) — are the centre of the action.

Everything is of a piece in this choreography and the work has a relentless drive from the start to the conclusion. There is a stunningly devised opening which depicts Medea and Jason arising from their marriage bed linked together by their children. There is power and passion in the *pas de deux* between these two when Medea learns of Jason's infidelity and a superbly dramatic solo for the tortured Medea. There is, as well, a wonderful dance for Creusa that is danced magnificently by Violette Verdy. Nor has Jacques d'Amboise before proved himself to be such a fine dramatic artist, while Melissa Hayden has one of the great rôles of her career and gives it a superb dramatic characterisation.

The Bartók piano pieces chosen for the score have been orchestrated in a manner eminently suitable. The *corps de ballet*, however, is disappointing in that they do not seem to perform the function of the true Greek chorus and the choreography for them seems more decorative than dramatic. Similarly, the costumes designed by Lewis Brown are not as becoming or suitable as they might be. Also missing is some sort of setting to establish the time and place and the black velvet drapes now used hardly fulfil this function. However, all these lesser details are relatively unimportant when one considers the impact and importance of this major new ballet. **Arthur Todd.**

The Seven Deadly Sins

First given at the Champs-Elysées Theatre, Paris in 1933 and later that year at the Savoy Theatre in London. First production by New York City Ballet at City Center, New York, on December 4, 1958. Choreography by George Balanchine. Music by Kurt Weill. Lyrics by Bertold Brecht translated by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman. Scenery, costumes and lighting by Rouben Ter-Arutunian.

Cast

Anna I ..... LOTTE LENYA
Anna II ..... ALLEGRA KENT

NOTE : *The Seven Deadly Sins* (or *Anna-Anna* as it was known in London) was commissioned by Edward James, patron of Les Ballets 1933. Under the direction of Balanchine, the company gave a season at Le Théâtre des Champs-Elysées in Paris and at the Savoy Theatre in London. It was during this season that Lincoln Kirstein persuaded Balanchine to leave Europe for America. The present production of *The Seven Deadly Sins* is part of the quarter-century celebrations connected with Kirstein's and Balanchine's work together in New York.

At the age of 33, Kurt Weill came to compose this modern morality play. Already famous for *The Threepenny Opera* and *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, Weill had, after Hindemith, made the greatest name for himself of any German composer after the First World War. Sensing the implications of the Hitler régime,

Weill later fled to Paris and then to America where he worked for many years until his recent death.

The seven canonical sins of the medieval theologians are Laziness, Pride, Lust, Gluttony, Avarice, Sloth and Anger. Bertold Brecht made a fable about America, of the dreams of every European in love with early Jazz, with evocative place names such as Mississippi, Memphis, Los Angeles and Boston, all of which carried the magic of strangeness and possibility. Against the background of the tango, fox-trot, waltz, the conventional family intones the Lutheran platitudes that force their daughter victim to break every rule in every city.

The rôle of the singing Anna was originally created by Weill's wife, Lotte Lenya, who is one of the greatest chanteuse of our time.

AFTER saying that this twenty-five year-old work is not in any sense a ballet at all, one can only add that it is a theatre piece and one that both the critics and a large public have hailed with superlatives.

Taking a minority view, I found it a wonderful artistic collaboration between masters in their respective fields that is almost completely negative in every sense. While there is no doubt about the historic interest of the piece, it has nothing positive to say to us today that is fresh or new. This is sad indeed because this seems to be the time for the creative arts to produce something affirmative, though possibly this too is a minority opinion.

The ugly story of prostitutes Anna I (acted and sung by Lotte Lenya) and Anna II (danced by Allegra Kent) is an immorality play, set in terms of German jazz and German expression, that teaches how a young girl can commit all of the cardinal sins and make them pay off hand-

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SEVEN DEADLY SINS : *Above, Allegra Kent, as Ann II, on a human horse in one of the scenes from Balanchine's revival of the Weill-Brecht work of the 'thirties. Below, a scene showing Rouben Ter- Arutunian's designs inspired by typical UFA films of the period, the period of German expressionism and of Emil Jannings and* The Blue Angel. *Photos : Martha Swope.*

La Fête Etrange

First given by the London Ballet at the Arts Theatre, London, on May 23, 1940. First given by the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet at Sadler's Wells Theatre on March 25, 1947. First given by the Royal Ballet at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden on December 11, 1958. Music by Gabriel Fauré, orchestrated by Guy Warrack. Choreography by Andrée Howard, Scenario by Ronald Crichton, suggested by an episode in Alain-Fournier's novel, Le Grand Meaulnes. **Scenery and costumes by Sophie Fedorovitch.**

Cast

A Country Boy ..... PIRMIN TRECU
The Bride ..... SVETLANA BERIOSOVA
The Bridegroom ..... RONALD HYND
Guests (the *pas de trois*) ..... GEORGINA PARKINSON, SHIRLEY GRAHAME, GRAHAM USHER
Other Guests ... JACQUELINE DARYL, DOREEN EASTLAKE, JENNIFER GAY, AUDREY HENDERSON, BRENDA BOLTON, CHRISTINE BECKLEY, MONICA MASON, HYLDA ZINKIN, ROBIN HAIG, CLOVER ROOPE, MAVIS OSBORN, ANN HOWARD, DEREK RENCHER, CHRISTOPHER NEWTON, KEITH ROSSON, MAURICE METLISS, RONALD PLAISTED, PETRUS BOSMAN.
The Singer ..... ELIZABETH ROBINSON

THE BRIDE : Svetlana Beriosova, as the Bride, on her way to the party. Her first entrance in the ballet.
Photo: Houston Rogers.

STORY

"WANDERING in the forest at the break of a winter's day, a country boy meets some children, who lead him to the grounds of a château where the approaching marriage of the young châtelaine is being celebrated with songs and dances. The boy becomes infatuated with his hostess and thus innocently causes an estrangement between her and the nobleman to whom she is betrothed. Joy and happiness are changed to sorrow as evening falls, and the bewildered guests prepare to leave. After trying in vain to console the young girl, the boy returns to the forest, his heart heavy, and his mind full of wonder at the events of the day."

CHOREOGRAPHY

IT is sometimes — although not often — nice to be proved wrong. A year ago in a "Ballet Perspectives" on *La Fête Etrange*, I suggested that "the Opera House almost certainly would not be suitable for the ballet". At the time I thought that the spirit of the ballet — soft-spoken and impressionist — would be lost in the vastness of Covent Garden; that it would be, in the words of Don Marquis, "like throwing a rose petal down the Grand Canyon". I was quite wrong, indicating perhaps that there are no unsuitable theatres, only unsuitable ballets.

This work has had a fascinating stage history. Originally produced during the sombre days of Dunkirk in 1940 at the tiny Arts Theatre by the struggling London Ballet, it was later revived in 1946 by the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet during its first season at the Sadler's Wells Theatre. Now widely acknowledged to be one of the few masterpieces of British ballet, its early productions passed by almost unnoticed while critics and commentators whipped themselves up into a frenzy of adulation over ballets like Helpmann's *Hamlet*. Here and there a few small voices went on steadily praising *La Fête Etrange* and the ballet's present success brings almost as much satisfaction to them as it must do to its choreographer, Andrée Howard.

It is perhaps curious that an apparently so fragile work as *La Fête Etrange* has been able to survive transplantation from the Arts Theatre to Covent Garden, yet underneath all its misty evocation of atmosphere, there rests an underlying literary and choreographic structure sturdy enough to withstand almost any vicissitudes.

The ballet's scenario was adapted by Ronald Crichton from an episode in Alain-Fournier's novel *Le Grand Meaulnes*. As I have already delved at length into this literary derivation (*Dance and Dancers*, Jan. 1958) I will here just point out that although Crichton's scenario bears no very close relationship with the incidents in the novel, it is remarkably successful in catching the essence of the whole story.

Howard has transferred this tale of adolescent passion on to the stage with the utmost skill. Choreographically it shows the influence of both Ashton and Tudor — particularly, perhaps, the Tudor of *Jardin aux Lilas* — yet the ballet is undeniably personal to herself, full of her careful eye for detail, her telling way of building up a character or situation, and her subtle use of music so that it supports the ballet's emotion at the same time as providing the basis for its dancing.

La Fête Etrange is so well constructed that although it passes like a fantastic dream, and one's first impressions of the ballet are likely to be hazy and ill-defined, its details will bear the closest scrutiny, the most minute analysis. At first sight it seems to make its effects almost by chance, yet they are in fact carefully calculated with deft intelligence and a Proust-like accuracy.

It would be difficult to imagine an opening more mysterious than the first part of *La Fête Etrange*, and throughout the whole work the onlooker is likely to find himself asking "What is happening?" "Who are these people?" Small incidents emerge as Howard picks out the ballet's significance with the kind of visual detail that might be used by a film director — two people's hands sliding down a balustrade yet never touching; a game of blind man's buff; a suddenly stilled entrance.

Howard's use of the more conventional means of expressive choreography is no less impressive. The first hopeful and then frustrated thrusts of the Country Boy; the outstretched, imploring arms of the Bride; the stiff gait of the Groom; the wonderful *pas de trois* of all three principals when their emotions are caught up in a wayward eddy and they dance together with an agonised realisation that nothing will ever be the same again — all these are examples of the splendid way Howard uses movement to illuminate character.

However, the Covent Garden transplantation has not been undertaken entirely without cost. At the revival's first performance it appeared that the ballet's lines had become a little too definite, that the texture of the work had very slightly coarsened. Various characterisations had been reproduced in altogether too cut-and-dried a manner. Already by the second performance a little of this harshness was softening, and I feel that it is a ballet which will obviously improve as it wears in the repertory, and varying dancers are able to impose their personalities upon the leading rôles. It is a work that is at its best when lightly misted over with a patina of age, and I imagine it will take Covent Garden about a year to get used to this new — and very important — acquisition.

DANCING

THE ballet practically cast itself; both Beriosova and Trecu had danced it in their Theatre Ballet days, and although Hynd was a newcomer to the trio he was also the obvious choice.

Many dancers have taken the part of the Country Boy from Frank Staff his principal creator, onwards, but I think perhaps Trecu

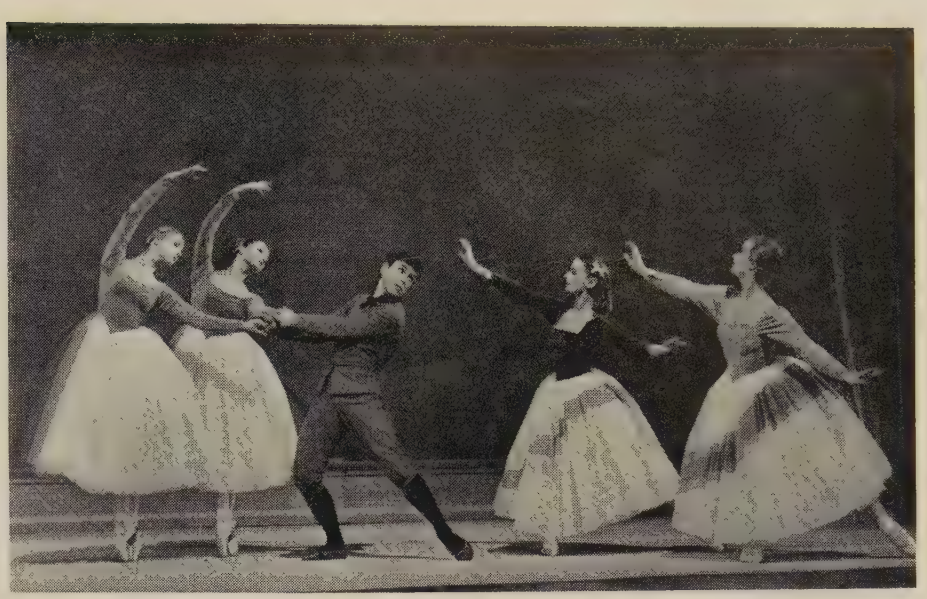
has been the best of them all. Even at the Wells he contrived to suggest a sense of gawky strangeness, adolescent ardour and bewildered innocence. Now he is more mature — even though he seems to look younger than ever — he has managed to deepen his original portrayal making it altogether more touching, perhaps more "natural". His dancing, which has now gained so much in control, was finer, and his complete performance seemed to have been enlarged for the Opera House without exaggeration.

Beriosova proved far better at the revival's second performance than at its first, and it is this which I propose to write about. Here she suggested a young and gentle creature entangled in a gossamer web of events she did not fully understand, of emotions she did not completely comprehend. When she had previously danced this part with the Theatre Ballet she had conveyed a certain charming gaucheness that was immensely appealing. This now seems to have been replaced by a graciousness and self-possession which while perhaps equally appropriate is possibly less poignant. She danced the flowing choreography with her characteristic fluency and breadth of movement, giving each one of the repeated *arabesques* a delicately perceived significance, making what could have become an empty repetition a vital part of her gracious characterisation.

Ronald Hynd's Bridegroom proved less effective than one would have hoped. He has all the looks, manner and stage presence needed for the part, and in a way his playing is perfectly satisfactory, yet it is the kind of part in which I would have expected him to have shown more than a touch of genuine distinction. His interpretation — although here he may well have been merely carrying out the choreographer's wishes — limited itself to arrogance and a stiff upper lip. If in time he can find a way of indicating the human being which lurks beneath the Bridegroom's puppet exterior, his portrayal would probably receive just that slight flip it requires to make it memorable.

The rest of the ballet was extremely well danced, the first *pas de trois* being exquisitely performed by Graham Usher, Shirley Grahame and Georgina Parkinson. Usher had a soft bouyancy and meticulous musicality which recalled Shaw's dancing, and the girls supported him well, although Grahame wore a most unflattering hairstyle, and Parkinson still showed a slight tendency to lag behind the beat.

Jacqueline Daryl (née Watcham), Jennifer Gay and Doreen Eastlake were attractively mysterious as the three grey ladies who cast a hazy spell over the ballet's quiet emotional climax. **Clive Barnes.**

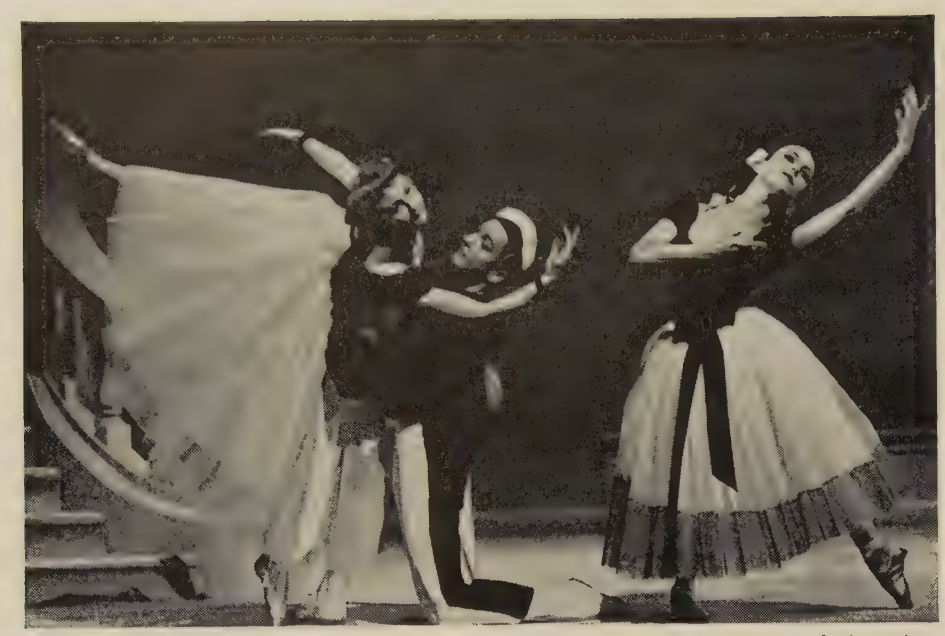


COUNTRY BOY IN A STRANGE WORLD : Pirmin Trecu, as the Country Boy, meets some of the guests at the Bridegroom's party.

MUSIC

MORE than in many ballets, the impact of *La Fête Etrange* is closely bound up with its music. Ronald Crichton chose it himself, and it must have been uncommon taste and perception that led him to the songs and piano music of Gabriel Fauré, who died in 1924 at the age of 79. Fauré was not the remote dreamer that his gentle music sometimes suggests, but a friendly and sociable man who distilled the essence of the world around him into music that is, in a phrase, proudly idealistic. It expresses human feeling at its warmest, but in a private and ultra-civilised manner. Just as Alain-Fournier was concerned with the transient nature of human happiness, so

PARTY IN THE SNOW : The guests dance at the curious open-air party with snow on the ground. In the centre are Pirmin Trecu and Beriosova. Photos : Houston Rogers.



TWO PAS DE TROIS: *Above are Shirley Grahame, Graham Usher and Georgina Parkinson in the* pas de trois *which is danced as a serenade to Fauré's song*—Mandoline.

Below, the three protagonists — The Bridegroom (Hynd), the Bride (Beriosova), and the Country Boy (Trecu) — get involved in a triangle dance in which the Bride's affections become divided. *Photos: Houston Rogers.*

Fauré, in his music, expressed the response, to inner thoughts and outward emotions, of the human heart.

Alfred Cortot, eloquent writer as well as outstanding pianist, once described Fauré's piano music in this way: "An intimate emotion inspires a style that is deeply intense and controlled at the same time, expressed in pianistic language that seems to exhale a secret warmth. It is to be felt in the emotional mood of the *Nocturnes,* where the night's dreamy ecstasy matches a rapturous or melancholy song, in the exotic languor of the *Barcarolles,* where the soft splash of water mingles with the happy murmur of love, or in the grave serenity which breathes through many of the *Préludes.*"

Cortot's phrases conjure up equally well to me the mood of the ballet as a whole, and it was chiefly from these *Nocturnes, Barcarolles* and *Préludes* that Crichton selected his score. To the piano music he added two beautiful Fauré songs, *Mandoline* and *Soir,* and the incursion of the singer's voice, far from being out of place in ballet as is sometimes mistakenly maintained, here varies the texture and intensifies the mood to vivid effect. Originally the ballet was danced to piano and singer alone; for the revival by Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet in 1947 the music was orchestrated by Lennox Berkeley, later abandoned in favour of the current, simpler but less sensitive, orchestration by Guy Warrack, whose version transposes some of the pieces from their original keys.

The introductory scene is set to Nocturne No. 7 in C-sharp minor, music instinct with youthful emotion, matching the Country Boy's undefined yearning, rising to a feverish height at his encounter with the Bride and losing itself in a dream as he is left alone. Brought to the party, he joins a game of blind-man's buff to the lively tarantella of the Impromptu No. 2 in F minor, followed by *Le Jardin de Dolly* (from the piano suite *Dolly)* for the Bride's *entrée.* The formal *pas de trois,* danced as a kind of serenade, is wonderfully paralleled by the song *Mandoline,* with its evasive *Fête-galante* atmosphere and a poem by Paul Verlaine related to the Italian *Commedia dell'arte* diversions.

A wild, energetic Barcarolle — No. 5 in F-sharp minor — pivots the general dance in which the Boy delightedly finds himself partnering the Bride, and forms the musical and emotional (but not the dramatic) climax to the ballet. Innocent happiness is subtly transformed, first into peaceful content and then into threatening disillusionment, as the soprano sings the tender, melancholy *Soir* — "une agonie exquise de couleurs," in the words of Albert Samain's verse. Doubt and disquiet are intensified in the following Préludes, No. 9 in E minor and No. 8 in C minor, with their angry undertones and purposeful seriousness, and the illusion fades into sorrow with the Nocturne No. 6 in D-flat, grief-stricken and full of latent passion, "confiding to us," wrote Cortot, "the secret of a sadness never expressed before".

In this final Nocturne you will find the full scope of Fauré's art. Its intricacy and subtleties of imagination are the lengths and depths of the furrow made by his intense feeling. The rock and the loam of his Eden are the arrested curves of melody and the cat-like flexibility and suppleness of rhythm that lends itself so well to expression in choreographic movement. Andrée Howard was wise, I feel, to withhold her choreographic climax until these closing moments. It becomes one of those rare instances when music and movement fuse into an organic

A BLEAK SITUATION : The Bridegroom (Hynd) stands at the entrance to his house in angry contemplation while the Country Boy (Trecu) sits on the ground thinking of his confused state of mind. The dancer in the middle is Jacqueline Daryl who is part of another wistful pas de trois *for three girls to the song* — Soir. *Photo : Houston Rogers.*

whole and flower naturally out of each other. Its effect, as of the entire ballet, entails a closer integration of music and dancing than was forthcoming under Hugo Rignold's conducting at the first performance (December 11), and the strings were lacking in flexibility of phrasing and richness of tone. Emanuel Young obtained a more eloquent and sensitive response at the second performance (December 13). The woodwind were fortunately on their best behaviour on both occasions, and the soprano soloist, Elisabeth Robinson, overcame an initial nervous wobble that threatened to disrupt her first song. She sang with warmth and feeling, but still more attention to phrasing was needed.

Noël Goodwin.

DECOR

IT has often been said, and written, that of all ballet's various elements it is the designing that dates the most. This observation really only applies to those designs which are created around and for the immediate moment, those which sheepishly follow the latest trend in fashion, the popular colour range of the moment and those which are conceived without a deep basic knowledge. The passing years are the greatest showers-up of the mere surface talent. I have a feeling that the best works of this century's several great designers will retain their impact when, nuclear fission allowing, the 21st century has got well into its stride. Much of the work of the three Bs — Benois, Bakst and Bérard — is as fresh and right today as ever it was. It is only that some of the subjects they so expertly decorated have passed out of the range of present trends in thought.

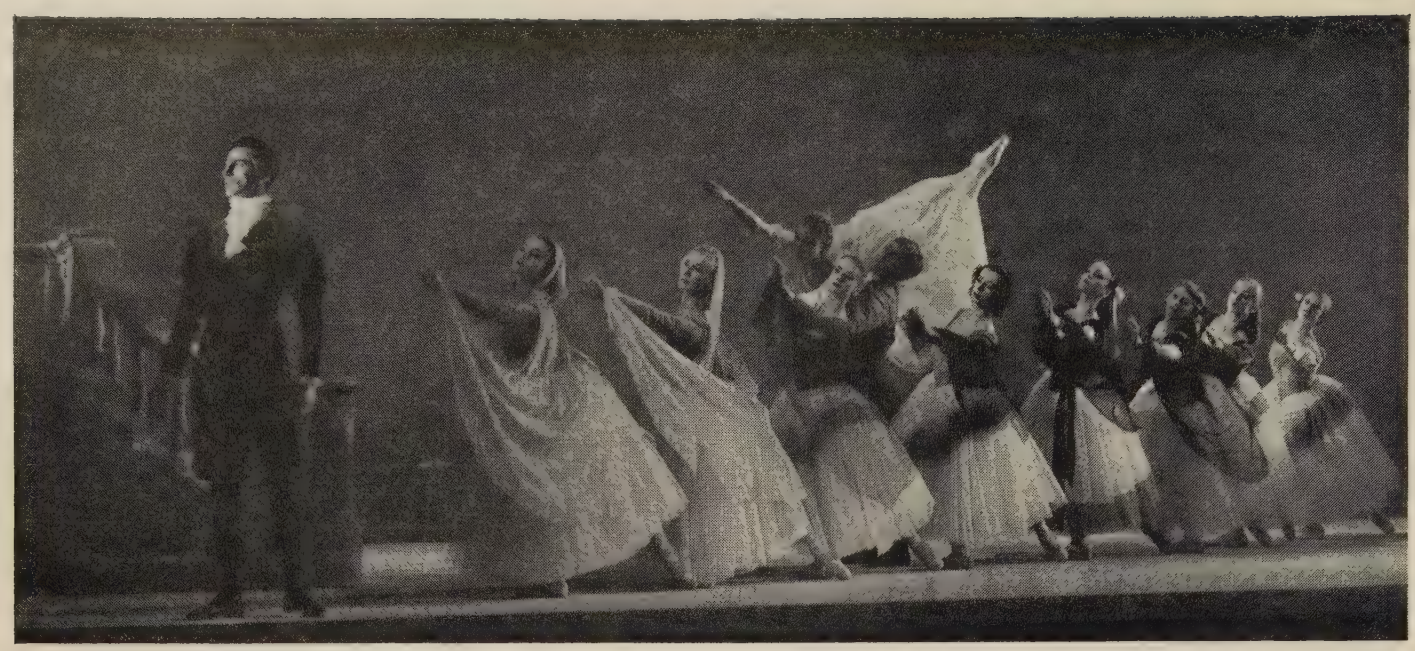
For instance, the move away from the once popular Oriental subjects has turned people against ballets such as *Schéhérazade* or *Thamar,* but there is absolutely nothing wrong or dated about Bakst's designs for them. Nobody, for instance, has been able to improve upon his work for *Le Carnaval* or *Le Spectre de la Rose.* With the return to romanticism, Alexandre Benois today enjoys a new lease of life, yet, at no time, has it been possible for anyone to create a better fair in St. Petersburg than did he in *Petrushka,* or moonlit glade for *Les Sylphide.* The same could be said of almost all Bérard's designing for ballet, it also applies to most of the designs for the Diaghilev repertory — even the Marie Laurençin designs for that *dernier cri* ballet, *Les Biches,* remain fresh because of their rightness and honesty.

Unfortunately most British designs have dated badly, and from the thirties, when ballet in Britain first started to take itself seriously, only two designers have any lasting value — Rex Whistler, who was Britain's equivalent to Benois, and Sophie Fedorovitch.

Frankly, Fedorovitch's immortal status was a little more rocky than that of Whistler's. To many people it would seem that a lot of her work dwelt in those wispy pastel vistas so beloved of the eras between the death of Diaghilev and the advent of the post-war French ballet. But because of her deep sense of fitness, her intelligence and her knowledge of art in its many forms, Fedorovitch earned herself a secure place in the short list of ballet's notable decorators. Apart from Marie Laurençin, Fedorovitch was the most feminine of designers. Which does not mean to say that there was anything weak or willowy about her work (it has remained for our male designers to show us *that* negative quality). She had that deceptive feminine elegance which hides a hard core of practicability and understanding of the mood of the work in question and the requirements of the choreographer. And this rather lengthy preamble brings us to her work for Howard's *La Fête Etrange.*

This ballet was created for a tiny stage, the Arts Theatre, it passed on to medium-sized stages when it was given at Sadler's Wells and was toured with the Theatre Ballet, now it has come to rest on the largest stage that Britain can provide — at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden — all of which means it can be safely put on stages such as the Bolshoi in Moscow and La Scala in Milan. This is possibly the greatest test that any theatre design has to face up to. If most people had their doubts, happily proved to be groundless, about the suitability of this ballet as a whole for Covent Garden, I must confess that my greatest personal fear was what would happen to poor Fedorovitch.

So lightly did she sketch in the misty atmosphere which surrounds the strange youthful wedding breakfast of *Le Grand Meaulnes* with its suggestion of winter that



THE END OF THE AFFAIR? : The Country Boy (Trecu), realising that his love for the Bride (Beriosova) is hopeless, returns her to the Bridegroom (Hynd). He carries her diagonally across the stage in a horizontal lift. A moment towards the end of the ballet. Photo : Houston Rogers.

I felt it might all dissolve on a large stage. That it never looked better has taught us the lesson, which Sophie so often taught us in her lifetime, that elaboration and clutter are not the necessary perogatives for spectacles in big theatres. By drastically eliminating every superfluous detail and by concentrating on a simple line and silhouette and by a subtly dramatic use of colour she has driven her point home more surely than is ever possible with a conglomoration of scenery and a plethora of knick-knacks.

How cleverly she has suggested youth by a bow on the hair of one girl and a tam-o'-shanter on the head of another ! How effective is the crimson swathing assymetrically placed across the backs of the three grey dresses for the girls who dance to the song, *Soir* ! That colour was scarcely noticeable before and all of a sudden it takes on an importance. What a brilliant idea it was to give the Country Boy (Meaulnes) a typical blue peasant blouse and black stockings with his blue breeches — it immediately suggests an unformed character. How well she spotlights the three principal characters by dressing them more or less naturally while the guests are periodless and comparatively undetermined fantasies ! How charming and simple are the little pierrots used to change the scene and introduce the party ! Possibly the Mandolin motif on the boys' tunics is used to excess and is also too definite, yet it is a pleasing design and it reflects the subject of the first song. The combination of plum, green, yellow, maroon, black and white for the boys with the pastel colours for the girls is still as effective as it ever was. One new colour has been added by Andrée Howard — a sort of duckweed green — which she chose for the additional *corps* as being a colour that she rightly felt would have been approved by Fedorovitch.

The setting has space and atmosphere and the wide expanse of snowy landscape give a sense of being suspended in time. The realistic stairway on the O.P. side leading to the Bridegroom's house becomes symbolic of his down-to-earth approach to the whole situation. If there is any fault at all to find in the designing of the whole work it is in the gauze curtain of tree suggestions which bisects the stage too sharply in the opening moments of the ballet. Though it is possibly the simplest way of depicting the approaches to the environment of the central theme, I have never much cared for anything that divides a stage in half in this way because it means that half the audience gets a truncated view of the action. But this is a very small point in such distinguished and elegant stage designing and the management are to be congratulated on the way in which they, by the use of cut border cloths following the line of Fedorovitch's design, have masked-in the set without losing its original proportions.

Peter Williams.

PERFORMANCE DETAILS

Running Time

34 minutes.

Audience Reaction

13 calls on 1st night, including 3 with house lights up: general cheering throughout the house. 2nd performance — 10 calls. 3rd performance — 11 calls.

Press Reaction

6 stars — rave; 5 stars — enthusiastic; 4 stars — favourable; 3 stars — lukewarm; 2 stars — unfavourable; 1 star — pan.

Daily Express ****; *Daily Mail* ****; *Daily Telegraph* *****; *Evening Standard* *; *Financial Times* ******; *Manchester Guardian* ******; *News Chronicle* ***; *Observer* ****; *Sunday Times* *****; *The Times* *****.

WEST SIDE—WEST END

Continued from page 11

grapher, Peter Gennaro, a free reign in *West Side Story* is to be commended as much as anyone else.

Those of us who were lucky enough to see the Diaghilev Ballet have used, and always will use, that company as a yardstick in our judgment of what we see today. Because from the dancing point of view and from its wonderful ideas and immaculate taste, that company still remains unsurpassed. I don't think that anybody will go far wrong if they use *West Side Story* in a similar fashion when they come to pass judgment on the dancing and use of the dance in any future musicals. It is something that must be studied by all who claim to have any interest in theatrical dancing and on no account whatsoever must it be missed.

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

Continued from page 13

somely enough to build a fine house for her family and old age.

The four members of the family (one of them a bass as Anna's mustachioed mother) serve as a singing chorus and they build the house about themselves as the plot develops. The modernistic setting by Rouben Ter-Arutunian, who was educated in Berlin, have all the flavour and bad taste of a 1930 German movie and they catch the essence of this era superbly as does, of course, Kurt Weill's score.

Actually there is very little dancing in this work at all and the *corps* is masked in the manner of many Kurt Jooss works. The beautiful Allegra Kent wears two or three of the briefest costumes to be seen anywhere in the New York theatre in recent years and, in one scene, serves as the chief decoration on a cellophane-covered platter in a night club scene. In another scene she does acrobatic bends and exercises.

The basic artistic flaw in this work is that it is composed in such a manner that we find Lotte Lenya singing the plot, as it were, with Allegra Kent dancing an illustration of the same thing. Sometimes this makes either the song or the dance seem redundant. It makes one wonder whether or not the lyrics might not well have been used as a springboard for the dance when they would complement each other rather than repeat each other as is at present the case.

Arthur Todd.

Ballet Perspectives: 9

Harlequin in April

by CLIVE BARNES

ONE of the functions originally envisaged for the old Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet when it started operations in 1945/6 was for it to assist in the discovery and development of a new generation of choreographers. From the beginning a number of new talents were tried out — notably Celia Franca, Anthony Burke and, to a lesser extent, Alan Carter and Nancy McNaught. But the most promising apprentice talent emerging during those years of experiment was clearly that of John Cranko's, and it came as no surprise when he was appointed Resident Choreographer to the company for the season 1950/51. Looking back on this period Cranko, in *Ballet Annual No. 7*, called it: "One of my happiest working years". During that time he produced three ballets, *Pastorale*, *Pineapple Poll* and, finally, *Harlequin in April*.

Cranko is unable to remember when the idea for a Harlequin ballet first came to him, but I recall him outlining something of it to me in Oxford at the end of 1949, at a time when he did not know just what kind of opportunities were to be given him in the future. By Spring of the next year the idea had become more crystallized and we find it being described in an interview with Harry Tatlock Miller *(Dance and Dancers*, March 1950) as "a formal arrangement with a slight emotive theme based on the life and death of Harlequin".

At its first performance the ballet was prefaced by the following two quotations from T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* :

> *April is the cruellest month, breeding*
> *Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing*
> *Memory and desire, stirring*
> *Dull roots with spring rain . . .*
> *What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow*
> *Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,*
> *You cannot say, or guess, for you know only*
> *A heap of broken images, where the sun beats.*
> *And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,*
> *And the dry stone no sound of water . . .*

It was certainly "unpleasant to meet Mr. Eliot ! " — unpleasant, and unfortunate too, for, while the work's title clearly owes something to that "cruellest month", the ballet itself, so Cranko assures me, bears no relationship to Eliot's poem. This unhappy red herring caused considerable confusion, a typical critical comment being that found in *The Dancing Times*, which said of the work: "It will only be understood by those having a knowledge of the literary illusions, myth and allegory in T. S. Eliot's poem, *The Waste Land*." These quotations, which were not in any event particularly apt, were subsequently removed from the programme, but the damage had been done, and Mr. Eliot, with his brow so grim and his mouth so prim, is still quite often encountered in commentaries on Cranko's ballet.

The original inspiration, according to Cranko, actually came from his interest in engravings by Paul Gavarni (1804-1866), a French lithographer perhaps best remembered for the satirical fashion drawings, which originally appeared in such publications as *La Mode* and *La Loge à l'Opéra*. Gavarni's seedy, yet mysterious, *commedia dell'arte* figures fascinated Cranko, who hunted down and bought quite a number of these engravings. Yet Harlequins and Harlequinades have always interested Cranko, appealing to him as being, in his own words, "tremendously rich in images and metaphors". It was, in fact, that Harlequin, Columbine and Pierrot could provide "ready made dance imagery, instantly recognisable to an audience", which made the choreographer anxious to construct a ballet around them.

INSPIRATION FROM GAVARNI: The original engraving by Paul Gavarni, the famous French lithographer of the mid 19th century, in the possession of John Cranko, which first gave him the idea for the theme of Harlequin in April. *The Pierrot costumes in this drawing, called "L'Ecole des Pierrots", bear a very close resemblance to the Piper designs for the same character in the ballet.*

The new ballet was to be one of two — the other being Ashton's *Tiresias* — specially commissioned from the Sadler's Wells organization by the Arts Council for the 1951 Festival of Britain. For the first time Cranko was to work with a completely new score, and this was commissioned from Richard Arnell, a young protegé of Sir Thomas Beecham's who had already composed one successful ballet — *Punch and the Child* — in America. The décor and costumes were entrusted to John Piper, who had earlier worked with Cranko on *Sea Change*.

The ballet, which had to be rehearsed in under two months, received its first performance on May 8, 1951, at the Sadler's Wells Theatre. The cast included David Blair (Harlequin), Stanley Holden (Pierrot), Patricia Miller (Columbine), and Maurice Metliss and David Poole (The Unicorn). The work was well received by the public and press, despite a certain understandable bewilderment over Eliot. It was widely performed during the Theatre Ballet's North American tour (1951/52), but never really established itself in the permanent repertory as did *Pineapple Poll*. The reason for this is perhaps to be found in the remark made by the Royal Ballet's American impresario, Sol Hurok, in his Memoirs : "I cannot say that it is the sort of piece that appeals to audiences by reason of its clarity." In any case it most regrettably lapsed from the repertory at the beginning of 1955 and has not been since. A revival was proposed in 1956 but various difficulties — sickness and lack of rehearsal time — made this impossible. However, the ballet is now scheduled to be mounted next month at Covent Garden.

Anyone seeing the ballet for the first time is not likely to be any more struck than was Mr. Hurok by its "clarity". Two of Cranko's early successes — *Sea Change* and *Pineapple Poll* — were admirably clear and direct narrative ballets, yet between these two he created the equally successful, if less sensational, *Beauty and the Beast*. This slender work was a delicately conceived poetic allegory, and with it Cranko first showed the taste for symbolism, differing planes of action and "seven types of ambiguity", that has since made such a marked impression upon his output.

The ballet is described as "A Pantomime with Divertissements" and consists of five distinct parts: Prologue — Pierrot's Song; Act I — April; Entracte — Pierrot's Violin Concerto; Act II — The Sky; Epilogue — Pierrot's Masquerade.

Pierrot is described on the programme as "The fool, the human muddler, sometimes likeable, sometimes interfering". At the beginning of the ballet this Pierrot — who, by the way, is dressed in the traditional Pulcinella costume, following the precedent of Fokine, and for that matter Gavarni — enters and makes an abortive attempt to sing a song. The scene is a theatre within a theatre, and as Pierrot, crestfallen with failure, shambles off with his carpet bag, the once rich but now tattered curtain of the inner proscenium parts, and the ballet proper begins.

In the centre of the stage is a writhing group representing Plants. They are tended by Pierrot with a watering can and from this cluster Harlequin slowly emerges, naked from the waist up, masked and helpless. Pierrot gives the newly-born Harlequin a coat and his traditional bat. Harlequin,

HARLEQUIN AWAKENS: David Blair, as Harlequin, emerges from the enfolding Plants.

GIFT FROM PIERROT: Pierrot (Stanley Holden) gives Harlequin his jacket.

Photos: Baron

feeling his strength awakening, tears off his domino-mask and chases Pierrot from the scene.

The Plants now reappear, tremulous, amorphous creatures, their faces covered with muslin masks. Harlequin detaches one from the group, dances with her, pulling off her mask and trying to make her join in his experience. But she hesitates and falls, and the Plants gather her up once more into their midst. Harlequin is disconsolate, and shrugs off Pierrot who tries to comfort him. Then Harlequin sees a Unicorn, and goes off in pursuit. Pierrot wearily follows. Harlequin, we are told by the programme, "here represents human aspiration re-born with the flowers in April. This aspiration makes it possible for him to break away from the plants, who are earth-bound and self-sufficient."

The curtains of the decaying inner theatre close, and Pierrot re-enters with his carpet-bag. From this he takes out a violin and tries his hand at a concerto. But this turns out no more successfully than did his earler song — one by one the strings break, and he once more retires discomfited.

Harlequin and Pierrot chase the Unicorn, who they eventually find bearing on its back Columbine, a girl whose features are identical with those of the Plant Girl earlier. Cranko, more explicit than James Thurber, calls the unicorn the "traditional guardian of chasitity" and says that he here represents "the barrier which separates Harlequin from the perpetual promise of Columbine, his ideal."

Columbine lulls the Unicorn to sleep, and she and Harlequin dance together and embrace. Pierrot, his jealousy enflamed, awakens the Unicorn, who instantly flies to the defence of Columbine's wavering chastity. Harlequin fights it, but as he puts it to flight immediately he is attacked by innumerable "magical duplications" of the Unicorn, and in the turmoil Columbine disappears. Eventually Harlequin emerges from the fray appearing to carry Columbine in his arms. But as he kneels before "her" it can be seen that all he has carried away is a dummy made of bits of sticks and a string of sausages, upon which is draped Columbine's dress. Pierrot, seeing the effigy, goes up to it to pay obeisance, but Harlequin contemptuously pushes him aside.

Harlequin is now weakened, and the Plants come back to claim him as their own. They remove his coat and hat, and naked and defenceless he returns to the earth. Pierrot picks up the coat, and tries to wear it. He is too fat, and can only get it partially on. Undaunted, wearing the magic coat half on and half off, he picks up the bat, and strikes a typical "Harlequin" pose — arrogant, cocky, ridiculous and just a bit, because we are all Pierrots at heart, endearing.

This is a monstrously pretentious ballet which comes to within an ace of living up to every one of its pretensions. It is a literary ballet, and technically it should perhaps be marked as a fault that its symbolism is not so much obscure as inconsistent. The significance of many incidents fairly reverberates through a whole declension of symbolic meanings, yet it it practically impossible to trace a dramatic line through the ballet's action that will measure up to examination. To take a simple example — Harlequin and Pierrot not only stand for a whole variety of different types of men, but they stand for different types at differing points in the ballet. Compare it with *The Shadow*; here, although the symbolism is capable of interpretation along many varying planes, each interpretation is consistent within itself. This is not true of *Harlequin*

in April, yet it matters hardly at all, as the overriding impression it leaves of poetic and evocative muddle is both pleasing and stimulating in itself. Furthermore the work's principal themes of aspiration and disillusionment, the true and the false, and the quick and the dead, are bound to make themselves felt in general terms, whatever specific associations we attach to the ballet's individual incidents.

The pity is that the April Cranko — himself then something of a blind Harlequin — has here sometimes been unable to clothe his dance vision in the choreographic flesh it deserved. His *commedia dell'arte* figures occasionally lean too heavily upon their Fokine forbearers and too often the choreography lacks the splendid energy and vision of the theme. However, this does not prevent the ballet from being one of the most notable achievements of our national company.

The differentiation which Cranko makes between the two "acts" of the work is admirable — in the first we are (in his own words) in "the world of the earth, of touch, of discovery; in the second we move to the world of the sky, of development, of particularisation". And the choreographic notation very cleverly exploits these two opposing sets of values. Cranko is also notably successful in his presentation of the Plants, with perhaps the exception of Harlequin's vegetable love, the choreography for which was inspired, he tells me, by those fast motion nature films of germinating plants.

There is also in Cranko — and was even from the beginning — a sure sense of the theatrical, and in his handling of the Battle of the Unicorns it enables him to produce a stage picture of rare excitement. Elsewhere in this direction he hardly ever makes a false move; at first I was contemptuous of the dummy Columbine, thinking it a cheap trick, yet at later performances when I appreciated the irony implied by the *commedia dell'arte* touch of the sausage-woman, I found the moment considerably moving. This personal discovery stresses a vital point in the appreciation of *Harlequin in April*: it is one of those unusual ballets in which the head quite often has to lead the heart.

Cranko right from the beginning of his career has proved remarkably successful both in selecting his collaborators and then welding them into a unified team. In an age where the choreographer is so often expected to act as his own librettist and artistic director, this is a quality it would be difficult to over-value. *Harlequin in April* is a splendid example of Cranko's skill as a steersman. The whole ballet conveys a beautifully balanced sense of unity. A good account of the ballet's score written by Richard Arnell himself is to be found in *The Decca Book of Ballet,* and it will suffice here to say that it is almost perfect for its purpose, with admirable melodic invention, cleverly apposite *leit-motifs* and craftsman-like orchestration. It is one of the better ballet scores to come out of England since the war.

If this is Arnell's most notable score, it is also by a long chalk John Piper's finest décor. It has been frequently speculated that the decayed theatre set was originally inspired by the burning of the Theatre Royal, Hanley, where in 1949 the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet had lost a good deal of their scenery and costumes. Legend has it that the burnt-out shell of the theatre gave Piper the idea for his desolate Harlequin booth. According to Cranko there is, unfortunately, no truth in this pleasant story, but it does not prevent the set from being extraordinarily evocative. The costumes presented Piper with an easier assignment, yet apart from the none too happy

COLUMBINE APPEARS: Columbine (Patricia Miller) also appears with the Plants. The picture shows Piper's setting. *Photo: Baron.*

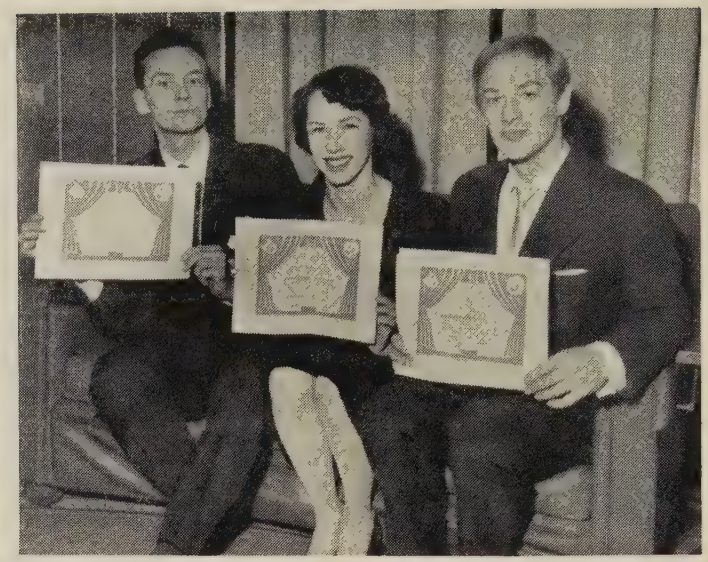
creations for the Unicorns they strike just the right note. Peter Williams well summed up Piper's contribution when he wrote after the première: "By the very simplest means, Piper has created a mood that is disturbing and full of uncertainty of human aspirations."

It took David Blair — then a young dancer in virtually his first big dramatic rôle — some time to get the full measure of Harlequin's o'er-vaulting ambitions, but his later performances possessed a characteristic vein of tough, virile poetry. Pirmin Trecu, the only other Harlequin, gave the more sensitive portrayal, even if at times his actual dancing was suspect. I personally preferred Trecu for his fierce, yet bewildered, anguish, but both were distinguished performances.

Equally notable in their way were the three dancers who played Pierrot — Stanley Holden, Donald McAlpine and Donald Britton. Holden produced a sort of stupid cunning and general amiability that was in marked contrast to Britton's simpler simplicity, while McAlpine steered a fidgety-nervous course between the brutish oaf and smart-aleck simpleton.

Both Patricia Miller and Maureen Bruce were excellent Columbines, the pathetic tendrils of Miller's dancing as the Plant who couldn't quite, and the radiant serenity of her Columbine the Ideal, adding up to an especially memorable dual portrait.

FINAL DISILLUSIONMENT: Harlequin (David Blair) finds that Columbine is only a creature of sawdust and a string of sausages. *Photo: Roger Wood.*



TRANSATLANTIC AWARD TIME: Left, Charles Weidman, Martha Graham, Hanya Holm and Helen Tamiris holding the awards presented to them by New York Times *Dance Editor, John Martin (centre). The awards were given by the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York (the organisation that sponsored the second International Festival of the Dance) to these people for their contribution to the development of the American Modern Dance.*
Right, in Paris they also give awards, and here are George Skibine, Marjorie Tallchief and Milorad Miskovitch holding the diplomas presented to them by the Association des Critiques Lyriques et Choreographiques Français. Skibine received his for his ballet Concerto, *in which he and Tallchief danced. Miskovitch received his for his performance in Béjart's prize-winning ballet* Promethée. *Both works were considered to be among the best French creations of the year 1957-58. Photo : Lido.*

curtain up!

Honour for the male

BRITISH male dancing was singled out in the New Year's Honours List when Michael Somes, principal male dancer of the Royal Ballet, was appointed a C.B.E. "I was amazed when I heard about it," said Somes, when I found him sitting under a palm tree on the terrace of the Monte Carlo Casino during his season there with Margot Fonteyn. "Though I don't feel that I in any way deserve it," he went on, "I am very glad to think that it also means recognition for the male dancers in our company. They have had many knocks but I feel that this honour is particularly gratifying for them."

Possibly Somes is the only person to feel that he does not deserve this honour, because in his dignified and self-effacing way he has been principally responsible for the recent rising status of the Royal Ballet's male contingent. Throughout his career he has never sought publicity or acclaim and whenever he has been acclaimed nobody has been more surprised than he. He is a dancer and a person who has gone about his work steadily and well and it is indeed a pleasure to think that this very proper attitude to the art he has served so faithfully has been royally and publicly recognised in this manner.

Wedding bells for ballerinas

TWO of the Royal Ballet's non-British ballerinas have been or are getting caught up in marriage. Though one of them, Violetta Elvin, is no longer dancing, she will always remain in the minds of everyone as a Royal Ballet ballerina. Just as the last year was ending she married Dr. Fernando Saverese at the Kensington Registrar's office. Both of them, if you have the popular press's interest in such matters, are 32. Dr. Savarese is a Neapolitan lawyer and he and his wife will probably settle down in Naples. There have been many legal complications about the marriage owing to the fact that Violetta is Russian and then became British on her marriage to her first husband; after her divorce she married an American — now it seems that this legal tangle has been unravelled. It has always been Violetta's dearest wish to settle down, have a family and lead the normal life of a wife and mother, so that it is to be hoped that this wish of a beautiful and much beloved person will now come true.

Another ballerina, Lithuanian by birth, has spent most of her dancing years with British companies, and most people consider Svetlana Beriosova to be of British origin, and she is, in fact, a naturalised British subject. After her years as a "baby ballerina" with Metropolitan Ballet she joined the Royal Ballet and has since risen to become a ballerina of international renown, considered by many to be the natural successor to Fonteyn. At the Chelsea Register Office on January 23 she is to marry the Pakistani psychologist, Mohammad Masud Khan. Dr. Khan, tall and elegant, and seen for many years in the stalls circle of Covent Garden watching his future wife's performances, comes from a famous Pakistan family and has known Beriosova since she was 16.

We know that all our readers will join us in wishing both these ballerinas many years of happy marriage.

MacMillan goes 'angry'

OWING to lack of time, the proposed and rehearsed *Orpheus* which Kenneth MacMillan was creating for Margot Fonteyn and Michael Somes for the Monte Carlo Christmas season could not take place, though it is hoped that this is only a postponement to a later date and occasion. In the meantime MacMillan has got involved with the group of people formerly known as "Angry Young Men". He is assisting John Osborne, of *Look Back in Anger* fame, in the production of Osborne's first musical — *The World of Paul Slickey*. There is to be a certain amount of dancing in this musical for which MacMillan will, of course, do the choreography, but he will also be partly responsible for the production and movement of the players. Whatever the outcome of this new phase in his career, it will provide him with an essential new slant on the theatre which should greatly assist him when he again comes to mount more ballets. After this show, which goes into rehearsal at the end of January, MacMillan will remount his *Danses Concertantes* to Stravinsky music for the Royal Ballet in the Spring.

A Russian dancer returns?

WITH the Spring come the guests to Covent Garden, and I hear a rumour that the Royal Ballet's guests this year are to be their former ballerina, Beryl Grey, partnered by André Eglevsky. It is about ten years since Eglevsky danced in London, when he was with the company of the Marquis de Cuevas. Always a popular figure here since his early Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo days, his return will be most welcome. For many years he has been the principal male dancer with New York City Ballet, and his recent resignation, it is rumoured, was brought about because of a disagreement about alphabetical billing. Whatever the truth about this, if we cannot see the New York City Ballet in this country, we shall at least be happy to see an old friend.

Fonteyn's choice

RECENTLY I told you that Margot Fonteyn was likely to make films of her famous rôles in the near future. Now I have confirmation of this most interesting project. I hear that Fonteyn has chosen to record her interpretations of Odette/Odile in *Le Lac des Cygnes* and the title rôles in both Fokine's *The Firebird* and Ashton's *Ondine*. Paul Czinner, who made the highly successful film of the Bolshoi Ballet at Covent Garden, is to direct Britain's great ballerina and will employ the same technique as with the Russians. This film will be shown commercially and I am willing to predict an enormous success for it in America as well as at home. Is it too much

to hope that some of the profits could be ploughed into recording some other works—*Symphonic Variations* for instance—which might not have the same box office appeal to the general public but which deserve to be preserved for posterity and would certainly be in demand by smaller specialist cinemas and clubs for many, many years to come?

What! No Tudor?

TED SHAWN, as I recently mentioned, came over to Europe specially to make arrangements for the American debut of Ballet Rambert at his Jacob's Pillow festival this summer. I now hear that, in addition to *Giselle*, the company will almost certainly be taking their production of *Coppélia*. When Shawn was in Dublin seeing the company he was enchanted with the production of this work and particularly by Lucette Aldous in the Swanilda rôle. The company's repertoire to be shown in the States will include, according to preliminary plans, ballets by Gore, MacMillan, Howard and Norman Morrice, Rambert's latest choreographer. At the moment there is no mention of any works by Tudor. I hope that this merely means that it has not yet been decided upon which of his ballets shall be taken because although I know that his work is familiar to American audiences, nearly all performances of his early works by American companies, shown in England, have lacked the style of the Rambert company. The Americans know that we have criticised their productions of Tudor's pre-war ballets; it seems only fair to show them how we think these works ought to be danced, so that they may judge for themselves.

Tcherina's theatrical approach

LUDMILLA TCHERINA, who recently caused a stir by walking out of the Paris Opéra just before the big production in which she was to star, has been having a little experience of people walking out on her. She is planning and rehearsing her new company for the near future which includes the promise of an early London season, but already quite a number of dancers have come and gone.

Her gimmick is that each ballet will have the services of a producer as well as a choreographer, thus ensuring a really theatrical approach. I seem to remember that something similar was tried with the Sagan *The Broken Date*, with no very conspicuous artistic success though with a certain amount of box-office acclaim. This does not mean that the idea itself is not a very good one. If the company appears in London it will be only Tcherina's third "live" visit to London — the first being with Lifar's company soon after the war, the second a one-night stand as guest artist at a Festival Ballet gala. She is, of course, known to thousands in Britain owing to her film appearances — in *The Red Shoes* and *The Tales of Hoffmann* amongst others.

While we are on the subject of ballets with a theatrical approach, I hear a rumeur that Charlie Chaplin may be working on a ballet in the near future and that Jerome Robbins may be one of the people responsible for the choreography. Picasso and Salvador Dali are said to be the possible designers.

Two American ladies die

TWO ladies, both of whom made great contributions to the dance in America, died recently. The first was Grace Robert, who was the author of the *Borzoi Book of Ballets*. This book was not only a mine of information about American ballets and American productions of standard works, but also one of the liveliest, most stimulating and best-written of all recent ballet books. It was full of prejudice, as one would expect of one who cared passionately about ballet, but never unfair. She will have an affectionate place in my memory whenever I take her much-read volume from the shelves.

On December 29, Doris Humphrey died at the age of 63. This famous American dancer and choreographer was admitted to hospital on Christmas Eve and her death was caused by complications from an illness which began late last summer. Arthritis caused her to retire in 1945, but in the most valiant way she continued with her life's work and continued to choreograph and teach choreography. In our next issue we shall publish the story of this great American lady's life and work.

A Princess sets the pace

NOW that Princess Anne is learning ballet, and nothing is better for instilling grace of movement and natural deportment into the young, there will be even more incentive for other little girls to do so. All of which will probably mean even more broken hearts from those who discover that they can never hope to be real dancers. What we still need, of course, is for many more little boys to learn ballet dancing, and if the athletic aspect of it could be emphasised more it is possible that boys, and even the parents, would consider it less "cissy" than is still the prevailing opinion of male dancing among so many British families. Now, Prince Charles enjoyed the Bolshoi company very much; if only he would start dancing lessons. . . .

No need for empty spaces

IN spite of the fact that "Fonteyn" performances are usually sold out at Covent Garden, there are often nights when there are empty seats. The reason for this has been brought home to me by the vast number of people who say that they never go now because "it is impossible to get in". It seems that the Opera House may have met the same trouble as the Crazy Gang, whose reputation for being always sold our reached the point where people didn't even try to buy tickets. The Crazy Gang successfully got round this by advertising "seats available" in the newspaper theatre columns. Covent Garden would lose none of their dignity by adopting the same policy.

happy birthday to...

		March
Pirmin Trecu	Royal Ballet I	13
Ursula Moreton	Royal Ballet Organisation	13
Igor Yousekevitch	Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo	13
Deirdre Dixon	Royal Ballet I	14
Jocelyn Terrell	Canadian National Ballet	16
Lillian Wellein	De Cuevas International Ballet	16
Walter Trevor	In New Zealand	17
Jeanette Cassells	Canadian National Ballet	18
Raymond Moller	Canadian National Ballet	19
Ray Powell	Royal Ballet I	20
Valerie Reece	Royal Ballet II	21
Vladimir Skouratoff	Ludmilla Tcherina Company	22
Rowena Jackson	Royal Ballet I	24
Sheila Alletson	Ballet Rambert	24
Lilian Jarvis	Canadian National Ballet	25
Joan Harris	Bavarian State Opera	26
Léonide Massine		26
Joan Benesh	Royal Ballet Organisation	26
Janet Greschler	American Ballet Theatre	28
Jeffrey Kovel	London's Festival Ballet	29
Ivan Baptie	London's Festival Ballet	31
		April
Shirley Bishop	Royal Ballet II	1
Leo Kersley	Teaching in Holland	1
Ian Metsis	Athens Opera	2
Edward Caton	De Cuevas International Ballet	2
Michael Boulton	Royal Ballet II	3
Lydia Sokolova		4
Antony Tudor	Choreographer in America	4
Wasil Tupin	De Cuevas International Ballet	4
Diane Westerman	London's Festival Ballet	5
Charles Bennett	American Ballet Theatre	8
Keith Lester	Windmill Theatre	9
Dianne Ireland	Canadian National Ballet	9

Dancer You Will Know

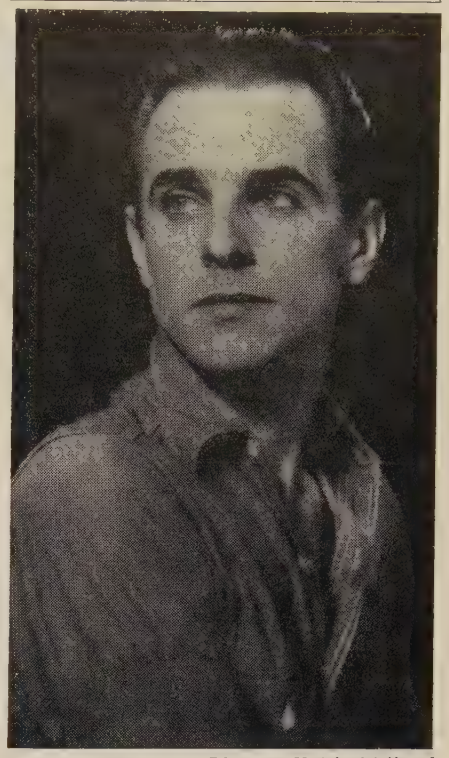


Photo: Keith Milland

DEREK RENCHER

BORN in Birmingham in 1933. Started to study dancing at the age of 18 with Janet Cranmore. Six months later came to London to study at the Royal College of Art, but also took classes with Barbara Vernon, George Goncharov and also for one month with Igor Schwezoff. In 1952 he auditioned for the Royal Ballet and was immediately accepted into the company. During the 1953 American tour, he stayed to dance with the Opera Ballet at Covent Garden, rejoining the company on its return. In 1958 he was appointed soloist.

Creations: Pas de Quatre *in* Noctambules; Variation *in Cranko's* Fledermaus *ballet. Rôles: Wilfred in* Giselle; *King and Lilac Fairy Cavalier in* The Sleeping Beauty; *Benno in* Swan Lake; *Duke in* Coppélia; *Suitor in* Cinderella; *Shadow in* The Shadow; *Prince of Arrogonza in* Lady and the Fool; Pas de Trois *and King of the East in* Prince of the Pagodas.

STAGE presence is a less common quality in young dancers than one might think, and consequently Derek Rencher even from his earliest days in the *corps de ballet* stood out from his colleagues. He has never looked at a loss on the stage, and his simple, direct bearing and unaffected acting have made him invaluable. Without any fancy histrionics yet by virtue of his strong personality he has contrived to give performances of real distinction both as Benno and Wilfred. He is almost equally notable in minor rôles such as the Sea Captain in *Ondine*, a Duke in *The Sleeping Beauty* or an anonymous thug in *A Miracle in the Gorbals*. Always an excellent partner, his actual dancing was at one time suspect. However, this has noticeably improved over the past couple of seasons. Both in *Prince of the Pagodas* and *Lady and the Fool* he has danced with natural elegance and intelligence.

Illustration 59 *Failli en avant* and *en arrière*

STEPS OF THE DANCE 37

by

BARBARA VERNON and JOHN GREGORY

Illustrated by EILEAN PEARCEY

CENTRE-WORK : ALLEGRO contd.

FAILLI : A beautiful flowing movement jumped from two legs in 5th position, or 4th position, or from one leg. In the air one leg is stretched straight beneath the body, the other leg stretched in an open position front or back *en effacé*. The landing is always on one leg with the extended leg brushing after through 1st position to 4th position.

FAILLI EN AVANT : From 5th position *en croisé en plié*; forward arm in 2nd position other arm in 4th position; spring into the air turning into *effacé en l'air* the front leg stretching beneath body, the back leg opening to *arabesque*. The jump travels forwards towards the corner landing on front leg *en plié*; the back leg slides through the 1st position to 4th position front *en plié*, taking with it the weight of the body. The back leg straightens. With the movement of the working leg the 4th position arm is carried to 2nd position with palm downwards; the other arm opens from 2nd position to 4th position. The head looks towards the forward shoulder.

FAILLI EN ARRIERE : The movement in reverse is a little more difficult. Standing in 5th position as previously described: the jump travels backwards away from the front leg, the body turning to the *effacé* position *en l'air*, the back leg stretching straight beneath the body, the front leg opening to 4th position *en l'air*. With the jump the forward arm travels from 2nd position to 4th position, the other arm from 4th position to 2nd position. With the landing *en plié* on the back leg, the front leg is lowered and brushes through 1st position to 4th position back *en plié* taking the weight of the body. The front leg straightens. Head as before described.

FAILLI EN TOURNANT : Usually follows a *Failli en avant*. From 4th position *en croisé*; forward arm in 2nd position, other arm in 4th position; a straight upwards push from the floor during which the weight of the body is carefully adjusted on to the back leg, which becomes the front leg as the body turns towards it and continues to turn *en l'air* to make one full turn with the forward leg stretched straight beneath the body the other leg opening *en arabesque*. With the landing on the front leg *en plié*, the back leg is lowered to the floor and brushes through 1st position to 4th position front *en plié* taking the weight of the body. Finishing in original position. A considerable impetus for the turn should be felt in the shoulders ; the arms are relaxed and easy, making the same movement as for the simple *Failli en avant*.

CHASSE : Is a sliding-bounding movement in which one leg chases the other through 4th position to 5th position *en l'air* consecutively. Often used in series and in combination with travelling *Allegro* steps and *Grandes Sautés*. It may travel in all directions.

There is also a simple *Chassé* movement which is used singly. From 5th position *en plié*, the working leg slides out to 4th position *en plié*, taking with it the weight of the body. The other leg straightens. The movement is similar to *Tombé ;* only the working leg instead of opening and dropping to the floor, slides through the floor.

CHASSE EN AVANT EN EFFACE : travelling *en diagonal*. Stand in 5th position *en croisé ;* arms in 1st position. With a little *Sisol* on back leg, front leg opens with a *petit developpé* to 4th position *en effacé*, the weight of the body is transferred to it as the foot slides forward into the floor. Simultaneously arms are lifted ; arm corresponding to forward leg opening to 4th position, other arm to 3rd position. When the forward leg has travelled well forward *en plié* into the 4th position, a spring into the air is taken from it, and the back leg is brought in to join it in 5th position *en l'air* (both legs stretched) landing again on back leg, the forward leg sliding forward *en plié* into another *chassé*, etc.

CHASSE EN AVANT EN CROISE : Exactly the same movement in the *croisé* position.

CHASSE EN ARRIERE EN EFFACE AND EN CROISE : The *Chassé* travelling backwards *en diagonal* is the same movement as the forward one ; but in reverse. The commencing *Sisol* is made on the front leg, as the back leg opens with *petit developpé* to 4th position back. The arms and head are always described for the *effacé* and *croisé* positions.

PAS DE BOURREE COURRU (or Pas Courru) : The running *Pas de Bourrée* is one of the most delightful free and easy movements — the very essence of *Allegro*. The simple run of 3 steps (up, up, down) first 2 steps on *demie-pointe*, 3rd step *en plié* travelling from 4th position to 5th position becomes transformed into a light and bouyant bound. The easy facility of this movement is almost always baffling to the novice; confusion usually resulting from a wrong start. Commencing from 4th position *en croisé* weight on back leg, front leg pointed. The weight is transferred to the front leg on "and" before the commencement of the music. The 3 steps of the *Pas de Bourrée* are made in one beat of the music "and a one" as a triplet. The first two steps on the *demie-pointe* should skim over the floor, travelling as it were over and onwards, the third step sinks into a smooth *plié*.

Pas de Bourrée courru is used travelling in all directions in *Allegro*; and serves as a good take-off for a *Grand Sauté*. Arms will vary according to the direction the step travels and the *épaulement* chosen. Example: Travelling forwards *en diagonal en effacé*, the arms will lower from 4th position with the preparation, opening through 1st position to 2nd position with the three steps, arm corresponding to back leg opening to 4th position. This simple step defeats all newcomers, and many tried hands. Its fluency may be acquired with patience and application.

Illustration 60 *Pas de Bourée courru*

EXAMPLES OF ALLEGRO ENCHAINEMENTS INCORPORATING FAILLI AND CHASSE

	Counts
(1) *Failli en avant*	And 1,
Glissade derrière	„ 2,
Jeté derrière	„ 3,
Coupé dessous	„ 4,

Illustration 61

Sisol Tombé Chassé en avant en effacé

	Counts
Assemblé dessous	„ 5.
Repeat on other side.	
(2) 2 *Chassés en avants en effacé*	„ 1, and 2,
Failli en avant	„ 3,
2 *Petits Jetés* (½ beat each)	„ 4.

Sisol Tombé Chassé en arrière en croisé

	Counts
Repeat *en diagonal.*	
(3) *Sisol Chassé en arnière en effacé*	„ 1,
Faillie en arrière	„ 2,
Pas de Basque en tournent en dedans	„ 3,
Glissade derrière	„ 4,
Assemblé dessus	„ 5.
Repeat on other side.	
(4) *Pas de Bourrée courru*	„ 1,
Jeté derrière	„ 2,
Pas de bourrée dessous	„ 3,
Failli en avant	„ 4.
Repeat *en diagonal.*	

Impressive cast for Christmas

TELEVISION
Reviewed by E. C. MASON

THE NUTCRACKER

Given on BBC Television on December 21. Choreography after Ivanov, re-created in six scenes by Peter Wright. Music recorded by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Hugo Rignold. Designer, Guy Sheppard. Costumes, Jane Scrase Dickins. Produced by Margaret Dale.

Cast

President Silberhaus...HAROLD TURNER
His Wife ..... JEAN BEDDELLS
Clara ....SANDRA MICHAELS
Franz ..... SAM JEPHCOTT
Dr. Drosselmeyer ... CLAUDE NEWMAN
Butler ..... NORMAN DIXON
Mechanical Dolls ..... YVONNE JOSEPH, MIRO ZOLAN, PATRICIA ASHWORTH, PATRICK HURD
The Nutcracker Prince MICHAEL SOMES
The Mouse King ..... BOB STEVENSON
The Snow Queen ... LUCETTE ALDOUS
The Sugar Plum Fairy MARGOT FONTEYN

Divertissements :

Spanish Dance ..... SARA LUZITA, BOB STEVENSON, YVONNE CARTIER
Arabian Dance ..... SHEILA O'NEILL, RUDI SZIGETI, CHARLES SCHULLER, GRAHAM McCORMACK
Chinese Dance ..... NORMAN DIXON, CHRISTOPHER LYALL
Russian Dance ..... MIRO ZOLAN, PATRICK HURD, ROGER TULLY
Mirlitons ..... LUCETTE ALDOUS, PATRICIA ASHWORTH, JEANNETTE OSBORNE, HAZEL MERRY, MARIA BUTLER

HOW maddening for the critic with an historical approach to ballet that at least nine-tenths of the original Petipa-Ivanov choreography should now be forgotten. Each version he sees is largely a new one and apart from the fairly standard choreography for the Sugar Plum Fairy it is scarcely possible for him to compare the performances of different ballerinas in familiar *variations.*

He can however console himself by analysing the choreography. The comparison which comes inevitably to mind is with the Lichine version, although a more relevant parallel in this case is with the old Wells version. Peter Wright's choreography "after Ivanov" is demonstrably inferior to Lichine's, although certain sections, namely the Spanish Dance and his restoration of the Snow Queen to the plot of Act 1, are a decided improvement.

This reproduction was made specially for television and one assumes that the new choreography was hurriedly made to order. Nevertheless it was streets ahead of Margaret Dale's previous production in 1956, which was, in fact, Festival Ballet's old version.

PARTY SCENE : The opening scene of Peter Wright's re-creation of Ivanov's The Nutcracker, *which was produced by Margaret Dale as TV's Christmas ballet production. Photo : B.B.C.*

THE KINGDOM OF SWEETS: Above, a rehearsal picture of Michael Somes and Margot Fonteyn in the final act of the TV Nutcracker. *Somes was the Nutcracker Prince and Fonteyn the Sugar Plum Fairy. It is the usual practice for the Sugar Plum Fairy and the Snow Queen of the previous scene to be doubled, but on this occasion the latter was danced by Lucette Aldous. The rest of the cast was mainly taken from the Royal Ballet organisation, Ballet Rambert and Western Theatre Ballet.*

Below, the corps de ballet *in the final set. The picture shows Guy Sheppard's setting and Jane Scrase Dickins's costumes.* *Photos: B.B.C.*

The first few moments were acutely embarrassing. An announcer with grey hair artistically waved "after Liberace", with eyelashes fluttering strongly enough to blow viewers out of their chairs, and a voluptuous lip make-up worthy of *Spectre de la Rose* told the story. Anxieties proved unnecessary for the cameras were soon floating over a pretty model panorama of a snow-covered village to descend and close-in to a silhouette of the Christmas tree in the window of the Silberhaus mansion, before dissolving to the party inside.

All the group scenes in the Prologue were well managed and disciplined without being stilted. Sensible business had been arranged for all, nothing was left to chance, and one was never conscious of television-shy dancers trying to improvise. The choreography for the mechanical dolls was at its worst with that devised for the soldiers and the *cantinière.* This had only the slightest relationship to the music and one was conscious of Yvonne Joseph endlessly marking time on point.

For the Harlequin and Columbine the choreography was more effective. Patricia Ashworth danced well with neatness and *brio* and Patrick Hurd's turns were excellent.

Harold Turner, looking faintly as though he was worried that his naked head would gleam in the lights, gave a jolly interpretation of the Father. Jean Bedells looked just the right age for the Mother but, for some unaccountable reason, stared back over her shoulder at the camera when moving to the Christmas tree with her guests. And from among the guests Shirley Rees stood out as a bibulous parent. Claude Newman did little with the rôle of Drosselmeyer other than present him in the most genial light. One expects a sinister undertone, perhaps with a hint of supernatural powers, for, without this, he becomes a simple personification of good like every other character in the ballet. The children all gave nice spirited natural performances and Sandra Michaels, as Clara, showed great promise as a dancer.

There are still some great gaping moments crying out for passable choreography. One can instance the battle of the Mice and Tin Soldiers. The Soldiers were well-drilled, though too obviously girls, and the Mice looked far more like greyhounds. The end product here was that of a graceful battle between Tiller Girls and a Chain Gang.

In theory the slow-motion effects of Clara and the Nutcracker Prince floating off to the Kingdom of Snow seemed a reasonably good idea, but, as with the last production, they were out of time with the music.

Lucette Aldous as the Snow Queen certainly danced with impressive sureness and attack and a great deal of charm even though one of her *variations* looked as though it had been composed for a boy. I always think that *entrechats-six* show off a ballerina's feet so well, especially when one is almost blinded by the shine of her shoe ribbons.

The *divertissements* variety in quality. The Spanish Dance was effective. The Arabian Dance, in which Sheila O'Neill gave a very poised and *plastique* performance, was notable for great ingenuity and invention. It included some very original slow lifts and can best be described as a *grand adage en l'air,* but due to the lighting (or was it the costumes?) it was not always clear enough in outline to see. The Russian Dance was well choreographed but danced rather tamely. Both the Chinese Dance and the Mirlitons were given in orthodox versions. The Mirlitons were crisp and professional, and Norman Dixon and Christopher Lyall

as the Chinese danced their simple nonsense with an appropriate droll humour.

Somes as the Prince, wearing a blonde curled wig, looked generally tense and a little unsteady in his *variations*. His partnering, however, must not be criticised. Fonteyn danced her Sugar Plum Fairy *variation* most beautifully, making it one of television's special delights for 1958. In contrast to this, she danced the *grand pas de deux* with dazzling *bravura* and many excellent *pirouettes*. I think that this can be considered to be her best television performance to date.

The best that can be said about the camera work is that it was adequate and that there were no ghastly mistakes. For television, however, one does expect the interaction of cameras and choreography to produce effects impossible in a stage version. The Snowflakes scene should have provided unlimited opportunities, but both Margaret Dale and Peter Wright seemed blind to its possibilities.

To sum up : there was a nice cosy atmosphere for the Prologue. I was, however, rather astonished at its length in contrast to the compressed treatment given to the rest of the ballet. Even though the Prologue tended to be a little drawn out, there was a falling off of interest after it. The climax, however, occurred in the right place with Fonteyn's fine burst of dancing in the *pas de deux*.

The final result could hardly be termed spellbinding, though it was good enjoyable entertainment. It was produced with intelligence rather than imagination, and it certainly lacked the monotony that might have been achieved in a better balanced, but duller overall production.

Guy Sheppard's sets were not particularly impressive, least of all his conception of the Kingdom of Sweets. I am becoming less and less fond of Jane Scrase Dickins' costumes. I cannot share her enthusiasm for Bolshoi-style doublets cut like school blazers, and some of the fabrics she drapes over skirts look terribly tatty.

The trouble with the little screen is that only a fraction of this impressive cast could ever be seen at once. Rather than clutter up the background, they have to be tucked away in corners or hidden out of vision most of the time.

VARIATIONS FOR FOUR

Given on Independent Television's Chelsea at Nine **on December 9. Choreography, Anton Dolin. Music, Marguerite Keogh. Costumes, Tom Lingwood. Produced by Wendy Toye.**

JOHN GILPIN LOUIS GODFREY
MICHAEL HOGAN
ANDRE PROKOVSKY

IN March last year this 11-minute work earned the highest fee ever paid for a ballet presentation on American television and it was received with such raptures that it is due to be repeated there soon. By this one can only assume that it must have been staged with greater care there than it has been here.

This production actually managed to convince some viewers who know the work that its choreography had been changed for television. This was not the case, but the fault of the cameras, which seemed determined to lead the dancers astray. The only actual change made was at the beginning where the opening *adage,* lasting about three minutes, was cut.

The dancers, especially Gilpin, were in excellent form, and despite the fact that they were not kept in full vision the whole time, the ballet provided first-class entertainment. When criticising these Granada programmes one must remember that they are really stage shows. Thus production is always on the conservative side because the producer is without the range of effects possible in a studio.

TAMARA TOUMANOVA

In the "Rose Adagio" from The Sleeping Beauty **in the BBC Television programme,** Music for You, **on December 28. Producer, Patricia Foy.**

A FEW months back viewers saw Toumanova give quite pleasing performances of the *Don Quixote pas de deux* (with Oukhtomsky) and *La Mort du Cygne.* Even in the latter work she miscast herself less than she did on this occasion in the "Rose Adagio". None of her present attributes are those of Aurora, and, apart from her remarkable balance, her technique is not particularly suited to this *adagio.*

Her arms are soft and supple but she continually lifts her shoulders and her line in *attitude* is not always pleasant; her head movements suggest Act 2 of *Lac des Cygnes,* and despite (or because of?) the fact that she takes a violently elbowed preparation for her *pirouettes,* these are slow, laboured and not always vertical. It must also be added that she looks rather sinewy and that her severe hair-style gives her face a hard appearance.

One got the impression that she was ever so faintly bored and regretted that the "Rose Adagio" was not *Don Quixote.* Furthermore, as she tended to stress every step her dancing was devoid of light and shade.

The dances which Peggy Van Praagh has been arranging for this and other recent *Music for You* programmes have been a great improvement on similar attempts made in the past.

On January 6, the BBC also transmitted its excellent telerecording of Simone and Kronstam in the *La Sylphide* and *Casse Noisette* extracts, but again on Children's Television. It is unfortunate that these cannot be presented at a later hour for adult viewers — even very late in the evening when channels are alleged to be freer for minority-audience programmes.

Dance and Dancers . . . . AT HOME

THE ROYAL BALLET (I) at Covent Garden

Chalk and Cheese Odette

THE performances of Svetlana Beriosova, at the moment, are taking on the quality of a lottery — sometimes you're lucky, sometimes you 'aint. On December 3, she and Bryan Ashbridge were rather thrown on at the last moment in the second act of *Le Lac des Cygnes* because Fonteyn and Somes were fog-bound on their return from Munich. The lack of time for proper preparation could possibly be the excuse for one of the most undistinguished performances of this act on the Covent Garden stage for many a long year. It was therefore with no feeling of elation that I approached these two artists in the full-length ballet on the following evening, December 4. Apart from the fact that physically they resembled the two dancers who had appeared on the previous evening, their performance seemed to be given by two quite different people — it was wonderful!

I can think of no reason for this inconsistency because Beriosova is one who gives immense thought and preparation to her every rôle; what is more, she was a mature artist over a decade ago when she was still with Metropolitan Ballet. At the moment she is going throgh a phase when her heights, such as in her *Casse Noisette* at the Nervi Festival, place her in line with the greatest dancers of our time; off-form, her graph-line takes a plunge impossible to believe in a ballerina. It is for this reason that opinion is so violently divided about her work.

However, be this as it may, there could surely be no two opinions of her performance of Odette/Odile on December 4. In fact the whole thing had gone with a swing from the moment the curtain rose. The *Pas de Trois* was beautifully danced by Maryon Lane, Annette Page and Brian Shaw. The latter danced his variation better than I have ever seen him do — immaculate finish to everything and great elegance. The lines of *corps* were good and somehow they all seem to be playing better and reacting to situations more plausibly than of old. Ray Powell's doddering old tutor, Wolfgang, had all its usual charm but possibly the greatest surprise came with the scenes between Siegfried (Bryan Ashbridge) and Benno (Derek Rencher). There was a naturalness in their relationship and an accord that I have seldom seen in our productions; it was far more like the playing between artists of the Royal Danes or the Bolshoi Russians. In fact the only thing wrong with this act now is the setting, which starts to look decrepit, and the costumes, which are mainly hangovers from Leslie Hurry's war-time designs for this ballet. It gives an unfortunate first impression of the designing because the rest is mainly so very good, and the lakeside scene is unquestionably the best I have ever seen.

All through this second Act, Beriosova showed a surety and depth of grandeur that is not, I think, possible in any English dancer. The emotion of Odette's love and fear can be simulated, but it needs a Slav temperament to make something that emanates from the heart and through the whole body. There was a time when Beriosova's Odette got its power mainly from her fabulously beautiful *arabesques,* and these used to come as punctuation marks in movement sentences of less distinction. In this particular performance her sentences were of a quality that made her *arabesque* come as the natural development of a whole poetic phrase. She also danced the variation better than I have ever seen her before — and this is a variation which few ballerinas can make anything of. I still think that she should throw discretion to the wind and do a more Soviet *attitude/arabesque* because, as we have seen when she dances away from the Royal Ballet, she can do them beautifully, and what is more, they suit a ballerina of her height to perfection.

Bryan Ashbridge has turned into a splendid partner for her. He has an intelligent simplicity in his approach to the classical cavaliers and although he does not, at the moment, achieve the impact of a Dolin, the extreme nobility of a Somes or the poetry of a Fadeyechev, he nevertheless brings a masculine self-effacement that makes an admirable frame for his ballerina.

As is customary, the Benno rôle is doubled by the Master of Ceremonies in the third act and here again, as with his Benno, Derek Rencher showed his increas-

CINDERELLA AT THE BALL: Michael Somes, as Prince Charming, with Svetlana Beriosova, in the title rôle, in the pas de deux *shortly after she arrives at the ball in the second act.* *Photo: Roy Round.*

ing mastery of the small but vitally important parts. It is not easy to usher in groups of artists with a dignity that is human while still retaining the hauteur of Court protocol. In this Rencher has obviously been influenced by the Royal Ballet's number one ceremonial master, Leslie Edwards, but at the same time he has added some personal touches of his own. In this act both the Czardas and the Mazurka were well given, though I still feel that our British dancers have to realise that these character dances when given at Court are something different to these same dances given in other places — vigour and bounce should be replaced by the style and aristocracy that were so noticeable with the Bolshoi company. Vigour and bounce are all right for a Neapolitan dance, which anyway is more of a buffoon number, and in this respect and on this occasion it was given with its usual joyous verve by Alexander Grant and Julia Farron. Grant's dancing, and his *batterie* in particular, seems even better than usual this season.

The culmination of this exciting act came, as of course it rightly should but not always does, with the Odile/Siegfried *pas de deux*. Of all the ballerinas I have ever seen with this company there is nobody who suggests so subtly the difference between Odette and Odile as does Beriosova. She never resorts to the hard vulgarity of some nor to the underplaying of others. If only her performance could be seen in a production as good as that of the Stanislavsky ballet, then that would indeed be something. The finest dancing and playing in the world can never quite surmount the many absurdities and incongruities of this act as we give it. The whole *pas de deux* was near faultlessly given and for those who worry about such things, Beriosova got through the 32 *fouettés* with flying colours.

Again in the last act she brought the same poetry to Odette as she had in the second act, while Brenda Taylor and Shirley Grahame made Leading Swans who justly deserved their title. Altogether a performance by the whole company which revitalised one's appreciation of these lengthy and well-worn classics. **P. W.**

Senior Soloists step out

THERE was something of a break with tradition on the afternoon of December 13, when two young senior soloists were presented to the Press, each dancing a new leading rôle for the first time. The usual practice of permitting dancers to acclimatise themselves to parts before placing them under the scrutiny of the general press was justifiably jettisoned in this instance, as both dancers, Merle Park and Annette Page, showed none of the usual hesitancy of a debutante. One of them is likely to be the next listed ballerina — I wonder which? — and both succeeded in furthering their respective causes at this performance.

The reason for Merle Park's diffident opening as Mam'zelle Angot was only too apparent, but once her confidence had been sufficiently restored, luckily before the first *pas de deux*, she gave a splendid performance, engagingly well danced and brimming with that special soubrette vivacity of hers. Some of the actual details of the dancing could have been improved — for example her unsupported double *pirouette* before the recognition in scene two looked shaky — yet in general outline it proved a performance of some distinction, owing little to its predecessors and replacing the more usual hell-cat vigour with a charming boisterousness of her own.

NEW TO THE ROLE: Svetlana Beriosova in the Kitchen scene from Ashton's Cinderella. *She has danced this* rôle *for the first time this season.* *Photo: Roy Round.*

Yet the surprise of the performance came with Annette Page in *The Firebird*, a portrayal that looks as though it will mark a milestone in its young dancer's career. Both helped and hindered by her striking facial resemblance to Fonteyn, Page gave a performance that was remarkable without any reservations whatsoever. She appeared to get right under the plumage of Fokine's mythical creature, and stressed its fantastic inhumanity as a bird of impersonal good-omen.

Her actual dancing was distinguished by beautifully high, clean jumps, reminiscent of Nerina's, while her avian flutterings were clearly marked, yet not to the point of exaggeration, and she brought a sense of Oriental serenity to the *berceuse* which proved completely apposite. The weakest part of her performance was her reaction to her initial capture, when her acting assumed a somewhat hysterical air, taking on the forced manner of a silent-screen vamp. Even here the intention to convey animal terror was a good one, yet it was carried out with insufficient subtlety and her over-elaborate make-up did not help. However this was still a notably assured attempt at one of the most difficult and rewarding rôles in the modern repertory.

Hynd partnered well and acted convincingly as the Tsarevitch, Jennifer Gay was an appealing and touchingly beautiful Tsarevna, and Franklin White, stiffly malignant, made the most of the beastly Kostchei.

The night previously — the première of the revival of *La Fête Etrange* — Ashton's *Les Patineurs* had a solitary airing. It was notable primarily for Brian Shaw as the Blue Skater. Shaw, dancing exquisitely this season, seemed to leave the dancing of the rôle to instinct, making himself free to con-

THE PRINCE'S DANCING ATTENDANTS: Ronald Hynd, Bryan Ashbridge, Gary Burne and Desmond Doyle in their pas de quatre *from the second act. A happy feature of the full-length classics during the Royal Ballet's present season has been the excellent dancing and performances of the smaller rôles. Photo: Roy Round.*

centrate on his cheeky characterisation, and at this performance his humour seemed more pronounced than previously. Maryon Lane and Annette Page, the former much improved, were the effective Blue Girls, while Gary Burne led the *corps de ballet* as if he were an advertisement for the BOAC Comet.

Cinderella revival

Out of 52 performances, both given and announced, between October 27 and February 7, only 9 evenings are allocated to general repertory, an almost incredible state of affairs brought about, it is to be hoped, by a combination of special circumstances. One of these special circumstances was Christmas, and as its own contribution to the festive mood the Royal Ballet revived Ashton's *Cinderella*. The management, with an agreeable show of sentiment, arranged the first performance of the revival to fall upon the 10th anniversary of the ballet's original production — December 23.

For the present series of performances, the first for nearly two years, a few changes have been made in the production, the most significant being those necessitated by allotting, for the first time, the rôles of the Ugly Sisters to women instead of men *en travestie*. Notable among the other changes is the omission of the Fairy Godmother's variation. This is the second time this has happened, for when Ashton first produced the work he included a variation for her which was deleted at the end of 1949, and then on the work's last revival created a new solo to different music which has now also gone the way of all flesh. One very significant and welcome innovation is the introduction of the Jester into the ballet's *apotheosis*, so that when Cinderella and the Prince sail away in their fairy barque the Jester is left looking after them, a forlorn and dejected figure.

The ballet revived well, although the playing of Prokofiev's magnificent score showed up cruelly the deficiencies of the orchestra. The ballet also needs to be redesigned. Jean-Denis Malclès' setting for the ballroom scene is just about acceptable, but elsewhere his sets have a dowdy air of quiet bad taste. The costumes — those for the Ugly Sisters have been regarnished — are hardly any more successful, and the whole ballet, which in any case is looking a bit shabby and threadbare, is decoratively rather offensive.

All this is really to say that the ballet needs not so much a revival as a completely new production, and when this proves possible, it is to be hoped that Ashton will take the opportunity of including the *divertissement* showing the Prince's search round the world for Cinderella, which is at the moment omitted. And if for such a production the orchestra could be as carefully rehearsed as the dancers, we probably wouldn't have people complaining that the music sounded "oom-pom-pom".

For the dancing in this revival really *was* carefully rehearsed, in fact it came up more beautifully than ever before; someone

FEMININE SISTERS: For the first time in Ashton's Cinderella, *the Ugly Sisters have been played by girls. Here are Margaret Hill, in the original Ashton rôle, and Moyra Fraser, in the original Helpmann rôle. Photo: Roy Round.*

(Ashton, Hart, Gregory or A. N. Other) has done a wonderful job in making the old ballet shine as brightly as a newly minted sixpence.

Fonteyn, despite all probability, seems to be dancing better than ever before — at least she is in *Ondine* and now *Cinderella*. On the first night of the revival she showed the whole gamut of the ballerina's craft, the touchstone of her dancing being the supreme balance she struck between simplicity and grandeur. It was a finely rounded portrayal, as clear in its delineation as, say, her Aurora. The withdrawn waif of the 1st act, with shifting moods of poignancy and shy but delightful playfulness, is all one with the transported, dream princess of the 2nd act, a unity now clinched, as it once was not, by the returned Cinderella recalling with a new natural wistfulness the ball, and then her final appearance — once more shades of Aurora! — as the radiant bride. I found myself immensely impressed by the difference of slight magnitude she made between her bearing in Act II and the concluding scene of Act III. Perhaps it was an accident that in the first she conveyed the atmosphere of a dream, whereas in the latter she had the radiance of true life flesh-and-blood, but if so, it was, to adapt an old phrase, the kind of accident that only happens to a dancer of genius.

What of her dancing? She is at the stage of her career where her technique might be expected to be falling off, and perhaps, and I mean just perhaps, her dancing has lost some of its arrow-sharp speed, the clashing, challenging quality that merges so strangely and excitingly with that softer, caressive aspect of her dancing. But the contrast — the steel and the velvet — is still there, to be exploited and played upon by her unequalled musical sense and command of rubato. I suspect the physical charm of Fonteyn's dancing — I mean questions of acting apart, as if they ever could be! — is to be found in its unexpected, yet inevitable, progression. She surprises by anticipating by a heart-throb's fraction one musical beat and then retards another; suddenly a flash of brilliance — a startlingly held pose perhaps, a turn quicker than one expected, or possibly a mysteriously showy arabesque — runs like a shiver of electricity through a quietly unruffled dance phrase. But while this unconscious mechanism surprises it

AND THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER : Prince Charming (Somes) and Cinderella (Beriosova), with attendant fairies, in the last act of Cinderella *just before they sail away to, apparently, eternal happiness.* *Photo : Roy Round.*

does not shock, for immediately the jarring note has been achieved it is recognisable as part of an inevitable unfolding as her dancing unwinds like the flow of thread from a musical spindle. Dancing like this is for keeps, and seeing Fonteyn, or for that matter Ulanova, today, one can understand how children could have seen Pavlova and remembered — almost before the age of memory — the proud outline of her dance.

Fonteyn is this season carrying all before her, but apart from her individual dancing there is another reason why this season interest has been spotlighted on Cinderella and the Jester, of whom more later. When the ballet was first produced Ashton took the decision to follow the English pantomime tradition and cast the Ugly Sisters as Dames, danced by himself and Helpmann. At the time I had misgivings, which later deepened, for knockabout comedy is not only alien to ballet but also more robust. This is not to say that Helpmann (and later Clegg and MacMillan) and more especially Ashton himself did not give performances of persuasive subtlety, but it was subtlety of a music-hall timing quite different from that encountered in ballet. As a result these two "ladies" swamped the ballet, inevitably leaving Cinderella and the rest like those lay romantic figures who are drearily interspersed between the slapstick comedy scenes in a conventional pantomime.

Now this has all been changed: well, not quite all, because while justice has now been done it has not been completely done, so that although the rôles have been handed to women, they have not been very greatly modified, and the dancers have been left in the uneasy position of wearing a coat with the cloth cut to a measure that cannot in any circumstances be made into a perfect fit. Yet the newcomers Margaret Hill and guest artist Moyra Fraser — a welcome prodigal this — over the course of performances worked hard to build up their parts and were largely successful.

Margaret Hill as the endearing Ashton-sister gave a performance of sweet intelligence, deliciously feminine and, with her feet splayed out in an ungainly waddle and her bird-face peering anxiously at the opposing world, she was clearly someone's amiably eccentric, but adorable, aunt. Moyra Fraser's bossy Helpmann-sister — the two had swopped wigs incidentally — had much the more difficult part and can consequently hardly be blamed for her relatively smaller degree of success. She achieved many funny moments but failed to impose a consistent characterisation upon them, so that one was conscious of seeing a series of humorous incidents instead of being shown a real person. Perhaps when given a few more performances this difficulty will have been overcome.

There can be no doubt that these new-look Ugly Sisters, while far less dominant, and even less funny, than their predecessors, are a great improvement to the ballet as a whole, and I for one hope that we shall never see a return to those dear dames of yesteryear. Yet at the same time there will be a special corner in my memory for that poor, silly duck of a Sister, Ashton once gave us, and I will always regard it among the best ballet performances of the past decade — even if it did have precious little to do with ballet, and came close to sabotaging the work of which it was such an ornament.

Edwin Denby, I remember, considered the Seasons *divertissement* to be possibly the best thing Ashton had ever done. While I would not go so far as that — and this might be not because I like it less but because I like other things more — it is certainly a very distinguished piece of neo-classical choreography which builds up to a fascinating climax. The four fairies were delightfully danced this season, with Merle Park as a lithe, green-bright Spring and Antoinette Sibley as a warmly languorous Summer, being outstanding. Annette Page phrased well and was only slightly less effective as Autumn, while Rosemary Lindsay made the best of the heavy weather accorded to Winter, a part in which only Beryl Grey has been totally successful. At a later performance (January 1) Georgina Parkinson took over this last part at very short notice and performed extremely creditably in the circumstances. However she was less successful in the *ensembles,* tending to lag on the beat. Although perhaps she should hardly be criticised on this occasion, this is becoming an unfortunate general tendency in her work.

The four Cavaliers were magnificently danced, better than in any previous revival, by Bryan Ashbridge, Gary Burne, Desmond Doyle and Ronald Hynd. Just to see the way they were leaping was almost enough to make one take up pen and paper to write to the Foreign Office, or whoever would be appropriate, and say: "Send the company to Moscow now — but now !"

Julia Farron's Fairy Godmother proved the weakest link in the whole revival, indifferently danced and very nearly totally lacking in those trails of glory which a Fairy Godmother should bring with her from outer space. She looked miscast.

The smaller rôles are choreographically far less significant than they should have been, and Ashton seems to have taken precious little care over their construction. The first scenes of both Acts I and III ought to have been alive with little bright jewels of choreographic characterisation, but Ashton has left much of it as dull as ditch-water. Franklin White made a satisfactory father, but Ronald Plaisted showed little of the wit and elegance that Harold Turner once brought to the Dancing Master. I liked Graham Usher as the Hairdresser (where, incidentally, has the Hairdresser's *double tour* gone to? Was it a private joke between Edwards and Ashton?), and Derek Rencher and William Wilson were amusing as the ill-assorted Suitors to the Ugly Sisters.

I have left till last Alexander Grant's performance as the Jester because I want to give it unusual prominence and to use an over-used word that I have never before committed to print. Grant was "fabulous". That wise man Cyril Beaumont, who never uses a superlative if a comparative will do, recently said: "Grant's Jester seems to grow in stature with each performance", and this is nothing short of the truth. I can think of no one in contemporary ballet who could perform this rôle better, not Farmanyants, not Babilée, not Evdokimov. Perhaps somewhere lurking in Russia there is some little ball of fire with a heart of gold that could better Grant in this, but if there is I haven't heard of him. It is not so much his dancing, and not so much his acting, but the spirit which blows through both that makes Grant's portrayal so remarkable. He has, and has developed, that facility, given to very few, of making movement and gesture take on a definite and almost objective significance. When he bounces through the air, his tense body stressed against the buffetings of an intangible wind, the impression he leaves behind is a permanent visual memory, like the recollection of a piece of sculpture. But it is pointless to pick out highlights in a performance as integrated as this. He even acknowledges applause while still dancing and without stepping for a moment outside a characterisation, which is as deeply felt in a quiet entrance idly twirling the bells on his jester's stick as in the spectacular entrances, runs and exits of the ballroom scene.

Naturally Fonteyn was partnered, and naturally well partnered, by Michael Somes, but it was at a later performance on January 1, when he was dancing with Svetlana Beriosova, that the evening was peculiarly his. That morning his appointment as a C.B.E. had been announced in the New Year's Honours List, and when he made his entrance in the 2nd act he was greeted with a great wave of applause, the warmth of which could have left him in no doubt as to the position he occupies in the affections of the audience. It was, indeed, a heart-catching moment to hear and participate in this public demonstration to a

man who has done so much to raise the standard of male dancing in the national ballet. And when at the ballet's conclusion he was accorded that rare honour the full stage call (previously only given to Fonteyn and Ashton), cheered by the audience, and pelted with flowers from the wings by the company, one only needed the orchestra to play a Danish style fanfare for the occasion to be complete.

In sober truth I could have wished that he could have taken his "benefit" in a rôle more typical and rewarding than the Prince, for it is hardly a part that enables his, or anyone else's, abilities to shine their brightest. However, he looked noble, partnered impeccably and danced with characteristic verve.

His partnering was a considerable help to Svetlana Beriosova, who was making her official début as Cinderella. (She actually first danced the rôle on the afternoon of December 26.) This was a somewhat belated début, and it had always been rather puzzling to me that Beriosova had not been cast in this part earlier. This, as a matter of interest, extends her tally of full-length rôles to the same number as Fonteyn's, the difference being that Beriosova dances Belle Rose in *The Prince of the Pagodas,* whereas Fonteyn has *Ondine.*

It says much for the young ballerina that her portrayal, presumably only in its formative stages, immediately challenged comparison with Fonteyn's. Not unexpectedly Fonteyn is, I think, on every count the better, yet the comparison is by no means odious. She proved a rather aristocratic scullery-maid — as indeed considering her parentage Cinderella presumably would — and managed to give some moments, such as when she pulls the scarf luxuriously round her neck, with considerable personal charm, throughout showing a gentleness and pathos that were wonderfully appealing.

Her dancing in the ballroom scene was large-scaled and generous. She danced with that indefinable air of a thoroughbred, and looked an heiress to the great tradition. The aura of a ballerina which nowadays is disconcertingly flickering around her head as if uncertain whether to alight there forever, was firmly and triumphantly in place, shining bright and clear. It was a delightful and extremely distinguished début in which she looked like the Crown Princess, perhaps more than ever before.

These two fine performances of *Cinderella* have served to confirm my impression that the company as a whole is just now dancing at an unprecedented general level, with the season appearing to be making up in quality what it lacks in variety.

C. B.

WHERE THE RAINBOW ENDS

AFTER a year's absence *Where the Rainbow Ends* reappeared this Christmas, finding a new home at the New Victoria Theatre for a matinee season which opened on Boxing Day. Let me admit at once that as a tribute to the festive spirit I find it considerably less beguiling, and far less attractive, than Festival Ballet's *The Nutcracker.* Yet thousands of children clearly think otherwise, and it was they who packed the theatre. Anton Dolin — working a double shift between here and the Festival Hall — played St. George with all of his usual zest and enthusiasm, declaiming the pseudo-Shakespearean verse with a histrionic fervour that could have done credit to a better cause. No effort has been spared to make the production attractive, yet a lot of the dialogue and stage business are rather musty stuff.

However the work's justification, if such is needed, comes with the brief, but all too-brief, appearance of Alicia Markova as the Spirit of the Lake. Dancing in a new ballet set by Keith Lester to music from Tchaikovsky's *Suite No. 3 in G,* Markova was all proverbial moonshine and thistledown. Lester's ballet, amorphous but innocuous, was certainly no great shakes, and hardly a very suitable vehicle to show off the great Markova. Nevertheless like Pavlova before her, it is not so much what Markova dances but how she dances, and her Midas-touch worked its usual alchemy over this somewhat depressingly base metal. She was neatly partnered by Jean-Pierre Alban, who in his stylish approach to the undemanding choreography showed himself to be a markedly improved dancer since his first appearance with Festival Ballet.

C. B.

LONDON'S FESTIVAL BALLET

IT seems as if London Festival Ballet's production of *The Nutcracker* is destined to become part of London's Christmas, and a very welcome part it will be. For the second year running the company presented their sumptuous Lichine/Benois production of the ballet for a twice-daily three weeks' season opening on January 22.

There can be no doubt that this production, with its really beautiful décors and costumes by Alexandre Benois and its charming production and transformation scene, is the ideal Christmas entertainment for children, and indeed the only Christmas show — for I discount the Royal Ballet's *Cinderella* as a more seriously intentioned work — that the average adult is likely wholeheartedly to enjoy without any condescension. The entire ballet has the kind of artless prettiness of a delightfully old-fashioned Christmas card.

There is little to criticise in the actual production, although I personally feel that even more could be done to make the first scene interesting, and I would welcome the intrustion of that unauthentic lady the Queen of the Snow to give interest to the second scene of this first act. Although this part has always been an interpolation on the original, the presence of a ballerina in this scene not only adds choreographic interest, but also provides a focus of attention. The revival was identical to the version presented last Christmas and there is nothing to add to the generally enthusiastic comments made by Peter Williams and myself on its first performance, which was reviewed in detail in February of last year.

MARKOVA IN THE LAKE: Two years ago, Markova appeared as the Spirit of the Lake in the children's Christmas play, Where the Rainbow Ends. *Then she was partnered by three cavaliers. This year she has only one, and he, Jean-Pierre Alban, is seen lifting her in one of the several beautiful lifts in the ballet which Keith Lester has devised to Tchaikovsky's* Suite Number 3 in G. *Photo : Paul Wilson.*

PRIZEWINNER: This photograph, by R. Burton of the Keystone Press Agency, has been awarded the first prize as being the best British Press picture of 1958. The dancer is Leonid Sarafanov with the Ukrainian State Cossack company when they appeared recently in London.

The performance the ballet received on the first night proved good without being stunning. But then it is hardly the kind of work that either demands or incites the very best from its performers. Apart from the children (once again provided by the Arts Educational School), whose natural high spirits can be calculated to run away with the honours in any show of this kind, the two really outstanding performances came, as one might have expected, from Anton Dolin and John Gilpin. Dolin's eccentric and menacing Dr. Drosselmeyer was a commanding, yet never intrusive, figure; the oddity of the character was stressed almost to the point of the macabre — a very proper approach to a character derived from Hoffmann — yet the rôle seemed never so exaggerated that it overbalanced the ballet.

The Prince, like most of these cardboard cavaliers beloved of late 19th-century ballet, is a most ungrateful part. It contains not a single opportunity for characterisation, and the most a dancer can do with it is to look princely, partner and dance with elegance, and convey a basic, two-dimensional impression of fairy-tale romance. All this Gilpin did with gracious and unflurried ease and the air of a man doing superbly well a thing that does not demand the full range of his abilities. His partnering proved excellent, while his highly polished dancing was good to watch.

The part of the Sugar Plum Fairy is even less interesting than that of her cavalier. She only appears in the last act, and even then does hardly anything more than dance a *pas de deux*, and while this is a very good *pas de deux* it hardly justifies the inclusion of the rôle among the great parts of the classic repertory. Jeannette Minty danced adequately, and showed a pleasing stage personality. Yet, on this showing at least, it would be difficult to make out a case for her being a ballerina in the true sense, for her competent performance quite missed the grandeur, sensibility and significance expected from a dancer in the very top echelon.

Nor were all the *divertissements* in the last act as brilliantly performed as they might have been, the Beriosoff *Trepak* (danced on this occasion by Donald McAlpine with Terry Gilbert and Roger Le Page) being, for the first time in my experience, positively dull. However, when one tired of watching the grown-ups there were always the children, led once again by the deliciously bubbling Mary Hewing and David Langford.

C. B.

INDRANI

INDRANI has just concluded a series of programmes of classical dances of India with her troupe of musicians throughout England under the auspices of the Asian Music Circle. She was born in Madras and her mother, Ragini Devi, was a famous dancer and a pioneer in the revival of Indian dance. When it came to selecting a dance medium for herself, Indrani chose Bharata Natyam, the pure classical style of the South Indian temples. She is moreover the principal exponent of Orissi, the classical dance of Orissa, and is in fact the first professional to master this ancient style and bring it to audiences outside Orissa.

We see so little Indian dance that few of us can pretend to have delved deeply into its complicated language. None the less Indrani gives one the certain impression that her dance is very pure and undebased. So much of her dance is performed in a wide second position. This gives her the firm support necessary to enable her to convey the seductive charm of rounded and liquid arm movements, and sinuous flowing lines.

To give greater definition to her poses, the soles of her feet and the palms of her hands are ochred red. But in addition to her slim figure and expressively beautiful face, she has that extra something which most Indian dancers seem to us to miss — she has a peculiar magnetism and warmth, and she succeeds in conveying to her audience the intense pleasure that she so obviously derives from dancing.

E. C. M.

TANI MORENA

In a programme of Spanish dances at the Hovenden Theatre Club on December 3 - 5.

THE average concert hall in England is usually the least sympathetic environment for a Spanish dance recital — cold, dusty and unsubtly lit, they usually depress me the moment I enter, and however great the artist and the performance, the all-pervading gloom seldom leaves me until I make my way out at the end. The Hovenden Theatre is new to me, but not, apparently, to anyone else. On the top floor of a building in a courtyard off St. Martin's Lane, it provides a small stage and a tiny auditorium and an intimate atmosphere that could hardly be better for flamenco dancing and singing — unfortunately Tani Morena gave very little flamenco in her programme and there was no singing.

Her programme was well arranged — starting with 18th century classical dances then following the well-worn path trodden by every Spanish recitalist you ever thought of, she danced to Albeniz's *Cordoba* and *Triana*. Then after the regional Jota from Aragon, she passed on to the dances of Andalusia. She also passed through this considerable range of years and of varying emotions with very little variety in her approach. I remember how the late Argentina would appear as an entirely different character in each of her concert numbers, and today one only has to see the way in which Pilar Lopez can etch a series of portraits ranging from the controlled fire of a gypsy to the naïve gaiety of a peasant and the enchanting coquetry of a Spanish music hall star at the turn of the century, to realise the tremendously wide range of Spain's dances and the importance of giving each with its own particular style. This monotony of expression and rather spikey arms I felt to be the main faults in Tani Morena's recital work.

She is a very competent and stylistically correct performer and it was the fault of the rather soft stage that her *zapateado* was not as crisp as it should have been. Out of all the numbers she gave, one was quite outstanding — her *Zambra Mora*. This undulating dance with all its Oriental suggestion in finger-bells and tambourine beating was excellent and an interesting relic of the Moorish occupation of Andalusia. I have never seen this given in a recital before and its inclusion made me realise how welcome these out-of-the-rut dances are. It seems a pity that more people don't take the trouble to search out the great wealth of dance from the Spanish peninsula.

In the rest of her flamenco numbers she lacked a depth of passion which made me realise that she was not Spanish (she is, in fact, Russian), but nevertheless she obviously comes of a good school and this was apparent in all her work.

P. W.

FRANCE

INTERNATIONAL BALLET OF THE MARQUIS DE CUEVAS

DECEMBER 9 saw the end of the company's season at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées. It was outstanding for the gifts of its dancers rather than for the presentation of new works. In fact, the last four programmes consisted exclusively of works from the repertoire or of revivals of works already staged elsewhere.

Nina Vyroubova as a purely romantic Giselle gives the heroine all the radiance which has brought her to the very peak of her art. A perfect mastery of the rôle enables her to give full play to the charming spontaneity of the little peasant girl who rises so naturally to the heights of tragedy before flying away immaterial and disembodied. Her sensitive and delicate interpretation — one of the best of our time — must undoubtedly be ranked with the brilliant and historic ones, which, alas, only our imagination can evoke.

Serge Golovine, young and sincere, although not very expressive, displays elegance and confidence and an accomplished performance of the *grande variation* of Act 2. Genia Melikova, in her usual rôle of the Queen of the Wilis, displayed to full advantage the rare perfection of her *pas de bourrée*.

In the Rose Adagio, Rosella Hightower's exceptional balance earned her applause, while Nina Vyroubova and Serge Golovine gave dazzling performances in *Tarasiana*. Supported by Nicholas Polajenko, Wassil Tupin and Daniel Sellier, the rôle of the coquettish Glove Seller in *Gaîté Parisienne* enabled Rosella Hightower to give another successful performance.

La Forêt Romantique, which is very carefully directed by John Taras, is, apart from one or two more inspired passages, a rather dull homage to Petipa. There is nothing romantic about it other than the exquisite appearance of Vyroubova, who carries on the great tradition of the *ballerina assoluta* of the past, and rather overshadows the other dancers — the frail and graceful Maria Santestevan, Jacqueline Moreau, Wassil Tupin and Georges Goviloff.

Another evocation of the past, but this time a little nearer to its model, is Anton Dolin's *The Pas de Quatre*. In the rôle of Taglioni, in which Markova's rendering remains unforgettable, Rosella Hightower wisely displays discretion.

On the other hand, *Variations for Four* is much less suited to the male dancers. Serge Golovine does his best with a *variation* created originally to display Gilpin's exceptional *legato*, and Georges Goviloff outclassed Wassil Tupin and Nicholas Polajenko.

The revival of Taras's *Piège de Lumière* enabled Rosella Hightower to portray again one of her most brilliant rôles as the great butterfly with multi-coloured wings. Mysterious, and always precise, she collapsed finally in the arms of Goviloff as a dashing Iphias, and Nicholas Polajenko, who remains decidedly inferior to the rôle's creator, Vladimir Skouratoff.

In *L'Ile cruelle* by John Taras, formerly staged under the title *Les Griffes* on June 6, 1957, at the Opéra de Buenos Aires, and later at the Théâtre Marigny, Colette Marchand gave an authoritative interpretation of the panther-like woman, imagined and costumed by Alwyn Camble. The work is based on the H. G. Wells novel, *The Island of Dr. Moreau,* and the music is by François Serette.

In spite of his remarkable technique and the ease of his *ballon,* Serge Golovine's performance in *Spectre de la Rose* lacked the magnetic presence and sensual radiance which this dangerous masterpiece demands. Moreover, Maria Santestevan's performance does not show the desirable poetic lyricism.

In contrast, in Balanchine's *Night Shadow* (in which Genia Melikova gave a sober and confident first performance), Vyroubova keeps intact the strange brilliance of this drama which suffices to raise this mysterious adventure to the realms of tragic fantasy.

While applauding the Marquis de Cuevas' perspicuity in acquiring an artist of such calibre, one cannot help regretting in view of the company's departure from Paris, the Opéra's loss of one of its most outstanding ballerinas.

THE PARIS OPERA

NOVEMBER 21 was an exceptionally rewarding evening at the Opéra. Yvette Chauviré once again danced Giselle, and the expressive finesse of her acting and the inner lyricism of her second act were very warmly applauded. As is usual with her, she once more brought out all the details of an interpretation which is obviously based on a very close study of the psychology of the character.

Youly Algaroff was a noble and moving Albrecht, and Claude Bessy a superb and accomplished Queen of the Wilis.

The revival of Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloë,* with new choreography by George Skibine, who decided to dance the principal rôle (previously allotted to Peter Van Dijk) himself, has already been performed. While Skibine, Tallchief and Bessy are in America, Tamara Toumanova is to make a reappearance in Lifar's *Phèdre,* the rôle she created in 1950.

OPERA-COMIQUE

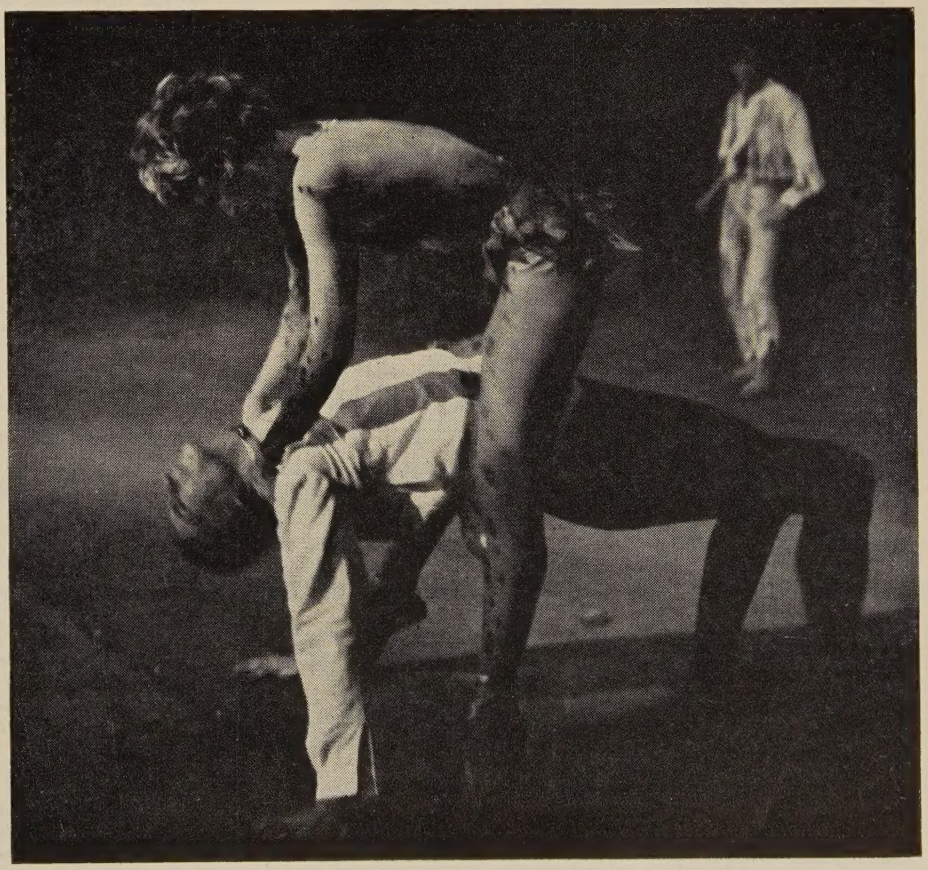
GEORGE SKIBINE has created a new *divertissement* for the revival of Messager's opera *Isoline* which is in complete harmony with the work : this was danced on November 21 by Liane Daydé and Michel Renault.

On December 12 two new works were presented in a programme with Massine's *La Boutique Fantasque* and *Capriccio Espagnol,* and Skibine's *Concerto* : these were *Les Fâcheuses Rencontres* (originally created for the Edinburgh Festival) by Skibine to a score by Maurice Jarre, and *Sinfonietta,* music by Albert Roussell and choreography by Jean-Bernard Lemoine. The principal dancers in the first new work were Marjorie Tallchief, Skibine himself, and Max Bozzoni ; and, in the latter, Claire Motte and Lemoine himself.

DANCERS AND SINGERS OF THE VOLGA

THIS Soviet ensemble created in 1953 has just made its first appearance abroad at a season at the Théâtre du Chatelet lasting from November 26 to December 14. On a

THE RETURN OF COLETTE MARCHAND : Owing to the recent illness of Nina Vyroubova, Colette Marchand made some guest appearances with the de Cuevas company for their Paris season. In Taras's L'Ile Cruelle *(formerly called* Les Griffes *when it was created in South America) she appeared with Philip Salem and Stephen Grebel. Photo : Lido.*



stage renowned for the memory of Diaghilev's first season and, two years ago, for that of the Stanislavsky-Dantchenko Ballet, this particular company must be considered modest in contrast. Furthermore, the Moiseyev and Bereyozka companies will always be to us the incontestable criteria for this type of spectacle : these pale rivals of theirs from the Volga do not offer them any outstanding competition.

As usual the most obvious elements are a cheerful good humour, disciplined high spirits, and the use of folk-lore as inspiration. From a strictly vocal viewpoint, it is regrettable that the female voices are predominant. On the other hand, on the choreographic plane, the men are outstanding for their virtuosity and especially for their jumps from crouching positions and their *jetés en tournant*. The energetic girls are often satisfied just to glide along in tiny steps trailing handkerchiefs in their hands, and this is often quite effective. Beside the aristocratic looking costumes embroidered elaborately in the old fashion, the modern costumes in violent pink muslin add a jarring note of vulgarity. But this, in all honesty, is probably in keeping with any Russian festival held on the banks of the Volga.

NEWS IN BRIEF

IDA RUBINSTEIN'S emulator, Ludmilla Tcherina, is busy forming her new company. She has already engaged Vladimir Skouratoff, Vassili Sulitch, Milko Sparemblek and Luis Diaz. It is also announced that the following producers will work with her : Jean Renoir, Raymond Rouleau and Michael Powell; as well as the choreographers Dmitri Parlic, Paul Goubé and Dick Sanders. It is planned to arrange programmes in which mime and speech are interwoven with dancing.

JEAN LAURENT, Jean Dorcy and the Association for Dance and Culture sponsored on December 4 a programme in homage to Serge Lifar at the Théâtre de la Cité Universitaire. Due to the absence of dancers from the Opéra because of their commitments to M. Hirsch, the principals of the De Cuevas Company danced *The Pas de Quatre* and an excerpt from *L'Amour et son destin,* while Tessa Beaumont, among others, created Lifar's new version of Florent Schmitt's *Oriane et le prince d'amour.*

ON November 27 at the Grand Théâtre de Reims Peter Van Dijk presented a choreographic gala performance which was notable for his long and very harmonious *pas de deux* to Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony,* which he danced himself with Jacqueline Rayet. Still with Rayet, who must be praised for her pure line, he created *Spirale* to a score composed by Jacques Murgier. Paul Gay's plot is in keeping with the current fashion for allegory in that it revolves around man all the elements of life — justice, love, truth and death. Mention must also be made of three soloists from the Opéra, Monique Bianchi, Paulette Mons and Christiane Bassy, who were very well cast and used to their advantage.

Marie-Françoise Christout.

COVER STORIES

This month's front cover, by Houston Rogers, is of Svetlana Beriosova, as the Bride, and Pirmin Trecu, as the Country Boy, in the revival of Andrée Howard's La Fête Etrange **for the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden.**

BERIOSOVA was born in Kaunas, Lithuania, in 1932. She was taught by her father, Nicholas Beriosoff, who was a dancer with Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Another early teacher was Vilzak. In 1941 she made her début with Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo as Clara in *Casse Noisette.* In 1947, she danced in *Les Sylphides* and *Casse Noisette* with the Ottawa Ballet Company. After a short stay with the de Cuevas company in the same year, she came to England and joined Metropolitan Ballet as a ballerina. She became immediately popular with the British audiences during that company's several tours. When the company disbanded, she joined the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet as joint ballerina with Fifield in 1950. Two years later she was moved to the company at Covent Garden and became a Royal Ballet ballerina in 1955.

TRECU was born in Zaraus, North Spain, in 1930. During the Spanish Civil War, he came as a refugee to England. In 1946 he entered the Sadler's Wells School and joined the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet a year later and almost immediately became one of that company's principal dancers. In 1955, he was moved to Covent Garden, where his rise in status has been rapid.

Ballet Dates

THE ROYAL BALLET I

at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

January
17 **(M)** *Cinderella* (Beriosova, Somes)
17 **(E)** *Cinderella* (Nerina, Blair)
20 *The Sleeping Beauty* (Nerina, Blair)
21 *The Sleeping Beauty* (Beriosova, Ashbridge)
23 *The Sleeping Beauty* (Linden, Blair)
24 **(M)** *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
26 *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
31 **(M)** *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Linden, Blair)

February
3 *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
6 *Coppélia* (Nerina, Blair)
7 **(M)** *Coppélia* (Lane, Grant)
7 **(E)** *The Lady and the Fool, La Fête Etrange, Mam'zelle Angot*
9 *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
11 *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
12 *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Nerina, Blair)
14 **(M)** *Coppélia* (Park, Burne)
14 **(E)** Ondine (Fonteyn, Somes)
18 *Mam'zelle Angot, La Fête Etrange, Petrushka*
19 *Coppélia* (Linden, Blair)
21 **(M)** *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Beriosova, Ashbridge)
24 *Mam'zelle Angot, La Fête Etrange, Petrushka*
25 *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Beriosova, Ashbridge
27 *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Linden, Blair)
28 *Coppélia* (Park, Burne)

March
2 *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Grey)
3 *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Nerina, Blair)
4 *Mam'zelle Angot, La Fête Etrange, Checkmate*
5 *La Fête Etrange, Harlequin in April* (1st perf.), *Mam'zelle Angot*
6 *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Beriosova, Ashbridge)
7 **(M)** *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Grey)
7 **(E)** *La Fête Etrange, Harlequin in April, Mam'zelle Angot*
9 *Les Patineurs, Giselle* (Linden, Blair)
10 GALA PERFORMANCE
11 *Les Patineurs, Giselle* (Beriosova, Ashbridge)
12 *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Grey)
13 *La Fête Etrange, Danses Concertantes* (1st perf.), *Petrushka*
14 **(M)** *La Fête Etrange, Danses Concertantes, Petrushka*
14 **(E)** *La Fête Etrange, Danses Concertantes, Checkmate*

LONDON'S FESTIVAL BALLET

January
12 Odeon Theatre, Southend
19 Gaumont Theatre, Ipswich
26 The de Montfort Hall, Leicester

February
9 The Hippodrome, Brighton
16 The Hippodrome, Golder's Green
23 The Davis Theatre, Croydon

March
2 The Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon
9 The Empire Theatre, Liverpool

BALLET RAMBERT

January
19 Scottish Tour (1 week).
26 The Perth Repertory Theatre, Perth

February
2 Scottish Tour (2 more weeks)
16 The Little Theatre, Middlesbrough
23 Her Majesty's Theatre, Carlisle

March
2 The Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton
9 The New Theatre, Hull
16 The Alhambra Theatre, Bradford
30 The Theatre Royal, Exeter

April
6 The Theatre Royal, Bath
13 The Opera House, Cheltenham
27 The White Rock Pavilion, Hastings

HAROLD CHESHIRE

(of the Central Mime Group) at the Royal Festival Hall (Concert Room), on January 29, at 8.15 p.m.

FILM SHOW

Organised by the London Ballet Circle at the French Institute on January 24 at 7.30 p.m. Films include Gene Kelly's Invitation to the Dance **and the Glyndebourne film.** On Such A Night.

INTERNATIONAL DANCE FESTIVALS

The following have already announced that there will be ballet in their festivals. Details to be published when available.
BORDEAUX : May 19-June 3 (London's Festival Ballet).
WIESBADEN : May 7-June 7
VIENNA : May 30-June 21.
STOCKHOLM : May 31-June 14.
HOLLAND FESTIVAL: June 15-July 15.
GRANADA : June 20-July 2.
DUBROVNIK : July 1-August 31.
GENOA (Nervi) : July 15-August 31.
SANTANDER : July 25-August 31.
ATHENS : August-September
BESANCON : September 3-13.
BERLIN : September 20-October 6.

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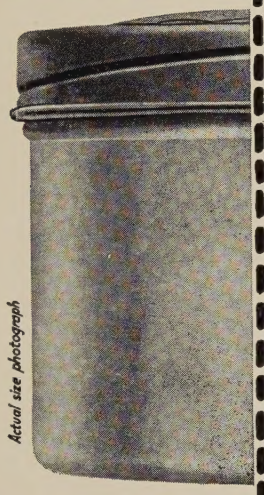
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Selection

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INTERNATIONAL THEATRE ANNUAL No. 2 ed. HAROLD HOBSON. 220 pp. 133 illus. Contributions by Sir Donald Wolfit, Henry Sherek, George Devine, Eugene Ionesco, J. C. Trewin, J. W. Lambert, etc. on theatre in Europe, U.S.A., Australia, Africa, with full list of World Premières '56-7, beautifully illustrated.
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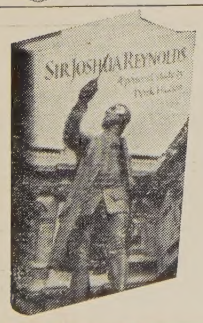

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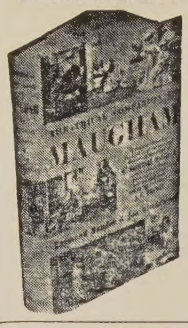

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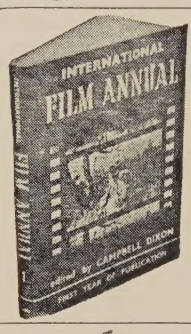

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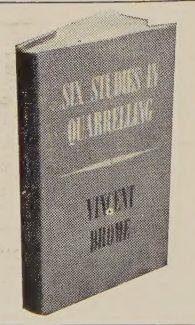

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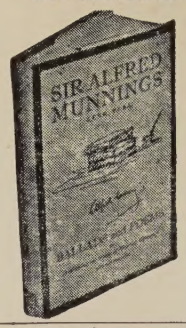

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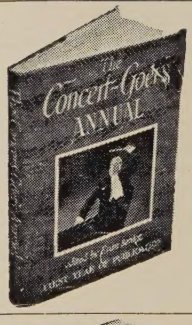

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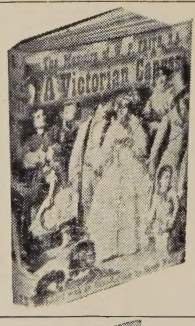

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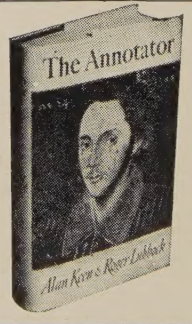

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